

and death – and that he was actually born in December 1871 not 1872! My next visit to the archives turned up his baptism without any difficulty on 7 January 1872. Now I always make a point of checking birthdates and take into consideration the time of year in relation to censuses and other events.

Another thing I learned during that early research was that you have to bear in mind that times were different. Searching for a marriage for those newly-found great-grandparents, Edward Cope and Esther Elizabeth, maiden surname unknown, I trawled through the parish registers for Birmingham for the likely period. In the end I gave up and reluctantly bought the marriage certificate, the reference for which had been easy to find. The marriage had taken place in 1869 in St Philip's Church in

Newly available records online can unlock clues. Now it is no longer necessary to view certain records from the British India collection solely at the British Library; instead you may view them on findmypast.co.uk. Shown here, the marriage of William Phillips and Louisa Appollis in 1861.

central Birmingham, the only parish I hadn't searched. So why hadn't I searched it? In 1905 St Philip's became Birmingham Cathedral and I knew it as such. I wouldn't have expected my ancestors to have married in a cathedral but back in 1869 it was simply the local parish church.

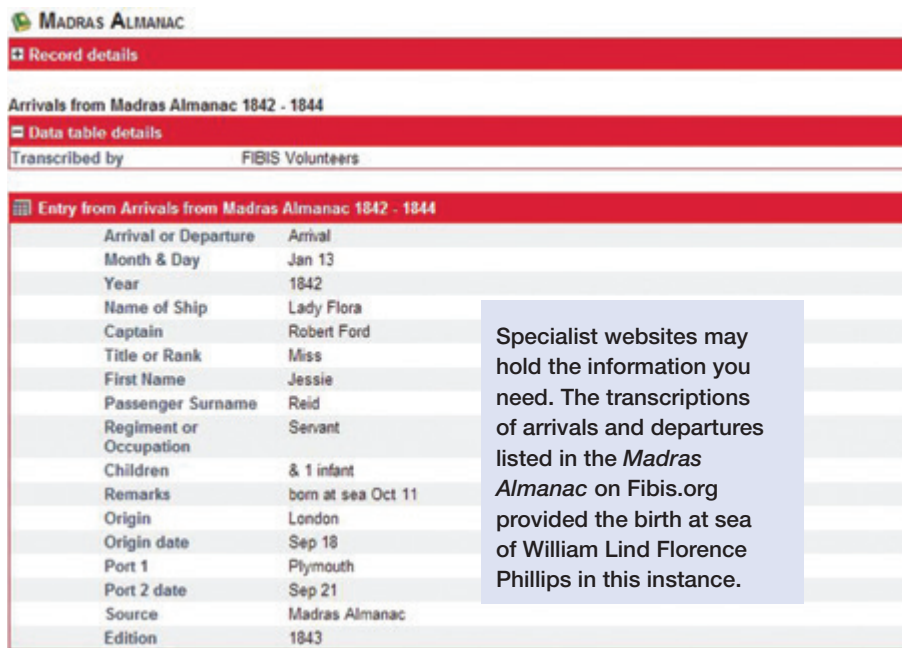
An amusing lesson also learned at the time was that no matter how carefully you question elderly relatives you don't necessarily get the whole picture. My mother never

knew her grandfather, Edward Cope, but my eventual success in finding his marriage certificate had given me Esther Elizabeth's maiden name as Hazlewood. I looked forward to telling my mother this exciting new piece of information. 'Oh,' she said, 'so that's who the Hazlewoods were!'

This same surname also gave me an early lesson in spelling variations. The original certificate in the church register has the name spelt in three different ways and to date I have 11 variations with the earliest from the 1500s as 'Azlud'.

I like to think these early brickwalls wouldn't catch me out now but it's important to remember that every brickwall and every new piece of research has its own problems and quirks so we are always on a learning curve. Despite finding my way round some brickwalls I still have some longstanding ones. Why did 2x great-grandfather marry as Henry Hensby Johnson then register some children as Johnson and others as Hensby, in no particular order? In turn, great-grandfather, registered as John Hensby in 1846, married first as John Hensby Johnson, registered his first child as Johnson and subsequent ones as Hensby, then married for the second time as John Hensby and registered my grandmother as Mary Ellen Hensby.

I clearly have to find some new sources and learn a few more skills – or perhaps someone out there already has the answer?



Specialist websites may hold the information you need. The transcriptions of arrivals and departures listed in the Madras Almanac on FIBIS.org provided the birth at sea of William Lind Florence Phillips in this instance.