

What's in the Genes? *Could it be music?*

I just love brass bands and concert bands. I remember, as a kid, playing Dad's¹ records of Sousa marches over and over again and just loving it – I'd march up and down the living room in time to the music. Then, as a teenager, I owned several recordings by Herb Albert & Tijuana Brass. They were such toe-tapping tunes and I'd dance around to them when I was meant to be studying.

I was thrilled when my daughters all took up an instrument, trumpet, flute and saxophone and played in their school concert band and school orchestra and then in our city's youth orchestra. I'd never had the opportunity to learn an instrument so I was very happy when my children pursued their music. Now my grandkids are following in their Mums' footsteps – so far we have one playing trombone and one playing clarinet and two playing piano. I love to see them playing their instruments. And I'm so happy that none of them are playing strings – I much prefer the brass and woodwind instruments.

The Queensland Brass Band Championships were held in Bundaberg, our hometown, at Easter when my eldest was about eleven and she and I spent four amazing days watching the bands and loving the music. It was such a treat and we loved it.

Where does that come from? Is it in our genes? I've often wondered and now I think I know where this fascination originates.

Let me tell you about Henry ALLEY. He was born on 23 January 1826 and christened on 24 December 1826² in Trowbridge Wiltshire England. His parents were Job (John) ALLEY and Sarah GUNNER who had married in Bradford-on-Avon in Wiltshire in 1818³. Job was a wool dyer in Bradford on Avon. We visited this delightful town in 2016 and you can see evidence of the textile industry in original weaver's cottages and of the woollen mills that were the source of the town's wealth during the industrial revolution. Sarah died on 31 December 1834 in Trowbridge, Wiltshire when Henry was 8 years old. He had three sisters and four brothers.

His father, Job then married Ann RICHMAN at St Swithin's Church Walcot Bath Somerset on 4 December 1836⁴ when Henry was just ten. Job and Ann then had six children including my Great Grandfather, Frederick who was born on 12th March 1845 in Trowbridge Wiltshire. In the 1841 census Henry was living at home with his father, Job, his stepmother Ann and 7 of his siblings. The story goes that he and his stepmother Ann did not get on at all and so he ran away to join a fairground band in the mid 1840s after learning to play the cornet.

¹ This is my adopted father, Bert Richardson

² England & Wales Christening Records, 1530-1906

³ P 69 Wiltshire, England, Church of England, Marriages and Banns, 1754-1916 for John Alley, Bradford on Avon 1810 - 1823

⁴ Somerset, England, Marriage Records, Bonds and Allegations, 1754-1914.

Information found on the internet written by Miriam Mason :

Harry did not get along with his stepmother Ann and he refused to become a wool dyer like his father and two older brothers. He somehow learned how to play the cornet and ran off in the mid 1840s to join a fairground band. He eventually settled in Portsmouth, Hampshire. There he married Mary Ann Gibbs in March of 1849 and had seven children - the youngest, Job, is Miriam's grandfather. Harry flourished in Portsmouth where he became well respected in the musical community. He founded a Boys' Brass Band. He was bandmaster of the 'Hampshire Artillery Volunteers' for over 30 years. He also ran a well-known pub called the 'Royal Oak', although Miriam believes that it was the female members of the family who ran the pub while Harry concentrated on his music. Two of his sons and several grandchildren also became talented musicians, including Job and Valentine who both served in the Royal Marines Band Service.

Henry married Mary Ann Gibbs on 17 February 1849 in St Mary's Church, Portsea, Hampshire⁵. By the time of the 1851 census we find them living in Portsea with their baby daughter Sarah who is 11 months and Mary's brother, John Gibbs who is an errand boy. Henry is a labourer.

They appear to do well in the next ten years as the 1861 census finds Henry to be a Licensed Victualler in Portsea. They have five children: Sarah, now 11, Margaret (7), Henry (4), Mary (2) and William (1 month). They have now employed a domestic servant, Elizabeth Truscott. Running a pub is not his sole occupation, however as he is a bandsman with the Royal Navy.



The story goes that the family operated the pub while Henry was playing his cornet in the Royal Marines band.

Figure 1 The Royal Oak Hotel Portsea

I have found a few references to the Royal Oak⁶ and the Alleys and these provide more information about their life at the time.⁷

⁵ FHL Film Number: 919748, 919749, 919750, 919751, 919752, 919753, 919754, 919755

⁶ "The Royal Oak Tree 238 (formerly 178) Lake Road, Landport

A Victorian corner house, stood on a street famed for its concentration of public houses, the Royal Oak Tree spent most of its life trading as the more familiar sounding Royal Oak, acquiring its latter name in around 1911. Occupying the junction of Terwick Street, the pub's location is now buried beneath the council flats of the Buckland Estate, due to the realignment of Lake Road in the early 1970s. Originally a Pike Brewery pub, the house was taken over by Brickwood's in 1910 and survived until 1971, when it was demolished for the redevelopment of the area.⁸

⁷ Royal Oak, 238 Lake Road, Landport, Hampshire

At 170 Lake Road in 1871 census, and 178 Lake Road in 1881 census

My first record of Henry's military service is between 10 December 1852 and 12 January 1856 when he was a Bandsman on *HMS Victory*.⁸ At this time, Victory was in harbour service so he was not off to sea but would have played for official functions.

His record shows that he was 5ft 5 tall with dark hair, hazel eyes and a fallow complexion and had a cut on his left eye. His service number is 51530. It also shows that he served on the *HMS Excellent* between 1867 and 1876 as bandmaster⁹ and on the *HMS Duke of Wellington* from 1877 to 1889 when it appears he was discharged and given a pension.



On 7th May 1765 HMS Victory was floated out of the Old Single Dock in Chatham's Royal Dockyard. In the years to come, over an unusually long service, she would gain renown leading fleets in the American War of Independence, the French Revolutionary War and the Napoleonic War. In 1805 she achieved lasting fame as the flagship of Vice-Admiral Nelson in Britain's greatest naval victory, the defeat of the French and Spanish at the Battle of Trafalgar.

For Victory, however, active service did not end with the loss of Nelson. In 1808 she was recommissioned to lead the fleet in the Baltic, but four years later she was no longer needed in this role, and she was relegated to harbour service - serving as a residence, flagship and tender providing accommodation.

<https://www.hms-victory.com/history> downloaded
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Directory of Pubs in the UK, historical public houses, Taverns, Inns, Beer Houses and Hotels in Hampshire. The Hampshire listing uses information from census, Trade Directories and History to add licensees, bar staff, Lodgers and Visitors.

The following entries are in this format:

Year/Publican or other Resident/Relationship to Head and or Occupation/Age/Where Born/Source.

*1865/Henry Alley/.../.../Harrods Directory *****

*1871/Henry Alley/Licensed Victualler/45/Trowbridge, Wiltshire/Census *****

1871/Mary Ann Alley/Wife/46/Portsea, Hampshire/Census

1871/Margaret Alley/Daughter/18/Portsea, Hampshire/Census

1871/Mary Ann Alley/Daughter/11/Portsea, Hampshire/Census

1871/William Alley/Son/9/Portsea, Hampshire/Census

1871/Elizabeth Alley/Daughter/5/Portsea, Hampshire/Census

1871/Job Alley/Son/2/Portsea, Hampshire/Census."

⁸ The National Archives Catalogue reference:ADM/18824 Image reference 1099

⁹ UK, Naval Officers and Rating Service Records 1802 – 1919 for Henry Alley piece 092

Henry was the conductor of the Gosport Foresters' Brass Band in 1863 and also of the Gosport Juvenile Foresters' Brass Band in the 1860s¹⁰. He was also bandmaster of the 2nd Hampshire Artillery Volunteers for 30 years as stated in his obituary in the Hampshire Telegraph on 5th September 1903.¹¹

On Henry's death there was a report in the Portsmouth newspaper - The Hampshire Telegraph - on 5 September 1903 p. 2 which reads:

"Death of an Old Musician"

The many friends and admirers of Mr Henry Alley will deeply regret to hear that this esteemed gentleman, whose age was 77, passed quietly away at his residence No. 73 New Road, Buckland, on Saturday evening last, at 7:45. Mr Alley was well known as Bandmaster of the 2nd Hampshire Artillery Volunteers, which appointment he held for over 30 years. The funeral took place at Kingston Cemetery on Thursday

So what of Henry's children: In the 1891 census we can see that both Henry and his son Job Henry who are living in Portsmouth, list their occupations as musicians. In the 1901 census, Job Henry is a bandsman in the Royal Navy. Valentine Harry Alley, son of Job Henry and grandson of Henry, enlisted in the Royal Marines Band on 2 August 1911¹²

Henry is my great great uncle. He is my grandchildren's GGGG uncle. His children and grandchildren are cousins of various separations to me, my children and my grandchildren. We are all descended from Job Alley who was born in 1793. Has our love of instrumental music flowed down through the genes in each of these six generations? Who knows? I can't prove it but to me it seems highly likely.

¹⁰ Brass Bands of the British Isles 1800 to 2018 – a historical directory by Gvin Holman
1st Edition March 2018

¹¹ Alan King, Historical Collections Library, Portsmouth

¹² UK Naval Medal and Award Rolls, 1793 – 1972, RN Long Service & Good Conduct Medals RM Portsmouth RMB 1903.