

# Bowler Family History

## Fleet Family Bible

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Front cover of 'Fleet' bible

**Some background information:-** In the course of researching my Bowler family tree I discovered that on at least 2 occasions my Bowler ancestors had married somebody with the surname FLEET. My great grandmother remarried as a widow to a Henry Fleet and a great great Aunt married an Abel Fleet. In both cases the groom was from Aston Rowant in Oxfordshire. The surname Fleet was quite common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Aston Rowant and the neighbouring hamlet of Kingston Blount and I suspect all the Fleet's recorded there are in some way related. With this in mind I was excited to see mention of a Fleet family owned bible on the Oxfordshire Family History mailing list in April 2007. Family members recorded in the bible were mentioned in the posting and it was clear there was a connection (by marriage) to my own family. I and other cousins replied to the posting

expressing an interest in the bible and the information it contained.

**The bible's recent history:-** The bible had been bought at a Flea Market near Austin Texas USA several years ago by a friend of the researcher who posted the original message. She was keen to return the bible to a family member and asked her friend to help. Using what records she could easily access She had determined that at least some of the people mentioned in the bible had been born in Aston Rowant hence the posting on the Oxfordshire list. How the bible made the journey from a small parish in Oxfordshire to Texas USA remains something of a mystery!



'Parents names' recorded in the bible

**Confirming the information:-** A little research in the Aston Rowant parish registers revealed that the information recorded in the bible was not quite as straightforward as we first thought. In fact the Clement and Mary Ann Fleet who are shown as parents were actually

Uncle and Aunt to Harriet Fleet BASS, Harriet's parents being Clement's sister Ann Fleet and her husband John Bass. Census records reveal that Harriet lived with her Uncle and Aunt as a child, perhaps they informally adopted their niece because they had no children of their own, but we are unlikely to ever know for sure.

Harriet Fleet Bass married George White on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 1908 at the parish Church in Aston Rowant by which time they already had 2 children, Violet born 1904 and Clement born 1906. 2 more children, Albert in 1908 and Marjorie in 1916, followed their marriage and all four are recorded in the bible.



Violet's marriage



Harriet and George's children

Some time after their marriage George, Harriet and their family moved to nearby Crowell where their youngest child Marjorie was baptised in 1916. It appears that at least 2 of the children married but as far as we are aware none had any children. This may explain why the bible strayed from the family. One of the children's marriages, Violet's, is recorded in the bible.

Albert's marriage was found in the parish register for Crowell. Marjorie does not appear to have married as we found her burial record at Bletchington in 1999 and her surname was still White. We have not been able to find any grandchildren. We think Clement also married but have not been able to find any details. Although Violet and Clement were baptised with the name Bass they appear to have used their father's surname.

**The Bible now:-** A total of four 'relations' of the Fleet family made contact. In the end the bible was sent to a relative who lives in America and is descended from Harriet's Uncle, Abel Fleet, who with his wife Annie Bowler emigrated to America sometime in the mid 1870's. The rest of us received photos of the bible, some of which have been used to illustrate this short writing.

This short article would not be complete without extending our sincere thanks for the very kind efforts of those who found and helped to return the bible to its family! (*Names removed in this 'web version'*)

*Bob Allan*