

John and Ursala Hicks

John Creedy

June 2011

Research Paper Number 1123

ISSN: 0819-2642

ISBN: 978 0 7340 4476 1

John and Ursula Hicks

By

John Creedy¹

Department of Economics

The University of Melbourne

¹ I am very grateful to Veronica Jacobsen for help searching ancestry records, and Cristina Marcuzzo for sending me a copy of her edited letters between John and Ursula. I should particularly like to thank Rosaleen Lee for answering my many queries about the Hicks's family backgrounds, especially regarding the complex and extensive family connections of Ursula Hicks, and for providing drafts of the family trees which are in the Appendix. I should also like to thank Robert Dixon and Denis O'Brien for helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.

1 Introduction

A considerable amount is known about the evolution of John Hicks's economics. In a series of interviews, recollections and commentaries on reprints of his work, he was apparently eager to explain the genesis of his views and the way they changed over the years. Yet little is known about his family background. Hicks himself published no information, except to state that he had a good general education, and only brief details are given by R.C.O. Matthews in his *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* article. Of later commentators, only Hamouda, in *John R. Hicks: The Economist's Economist*, gives some brief background information.² Matthews also mentions that Hicks's wife, Ursula, 'protected him and organised their lives' during their fifty years of marriage and that, 'they were seldom separated, even for a few days'. Their life together may justly be described in terms of a partnership, resulting in a number of joint publications in addition to shared enthusiasms.³

Valuable insights into their relationship and characters (as well as those of a range of economists in London and Cambridge) can be obtained from the correspondence produced in the months before their marriage, when John was in Cambridge and Ursula remained in London.⁴ But again very little is known in the economics profession about Ursula and her background, to the extent that more than

² For other reviews of Hicks's work see, for example, Bliss, C. (2008) Hicks, John Richard (1904-1989), in *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics* (edited by S.N. Durlauf and L.E. Blume. London: Palgrave Macmillan); Puttaswamaiah, K. (ed.) (2001) *John Hicks: His Contributions to Economic Theory and Application* (London: Transaction Publishers); Scazzieri, R., Sen, A. and Zamagni, S. (eds.) (2008) *Markets, Money and Capital: Hicksian Economics for the Twenty-first Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). A brief portrait is in Wolfe, J.N. (1968) *Value, Capital, and Growth: Papers in Honour of Sir John Hicks*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

³ Ursula's career is briefly reviewed in the introduction to *Public Finance, Planning and Economic Development* (1973, edited by W.L. David. London: Macmillan).

⁴ See Marcuzzo, M.C. and Sanfilippo, E. with Hirai, T. and Nishizawa, T. (2006) The letters between John Hicks and Ursula Webb September-December 1935. *Institute for Economic and Business Administration Research, University of Hyogo, Working Paper*, no. 207.

one internet site states with confidence, and in ignorance of its inanity, that she was the daughter of Sidney and Beatrice Webb.

There is nevertheless much that is of interest in the backgrounds of John and Ursula Hicks. While this cannot of course be expected to shed any light on his economics, it does reveal information about how he made the decision to go to the London School of Economics and thus turn to serious study of economics, and how he earlier acquired a solid mathematics training. It also reveals influences on his long and deep interest in history. Furthermore it casts some light on his way of life, centred for something like forty years in the Cotswold village of Blockley, and also on his interaction with other economists.

2 John Hicks's Background and Training

John Richard Hicks was born on 8 April 1904 in Leamington Spa, in Warwickshire, and died on 20 May 1989 in Blockley, Gloucestershire.⁵ The name Hicks, along with its variants, Hick, Hicke, Hickers and Hickson, is in fact common in England. It is a patronymic derived from the name Richard, which was popular in England after the reign of King Richard 1st (1189-1199). For this reason it is extremely difficult to trace the family ancestry very far.

2.1 The Family Background

2.1.1 John's Father, Edward Hicks

John's father, Edward Hicks (1878-1952) was born in St Columb in Cornwall. Edward's parents were Richard Hicks (born in Colan in Cornwall about 1836) and Mary (nee Hoblyn, born about 1837), who married in 1865 in St Columb.⁶ Mary died in 1881, and in the census of later that year Richard is recorded as living in Colan

⁵ The 1911 census gives the year of birth incorrectly as 1905. Some sources, including Hicks himself in his autobiographical notes written after the award of the Nobel Prize, give nearby Warwick as the place of birth.

⁶ The 1861 census lists, at 208 Fair Street, St Columb, the family consisting of Richard Hoblyn (then aged 66), his wife Francis Hoblyn (aged 67) and their daughter Mary J. Hoblyn (then aged 27).

with nine children.⁷ In 1882 Richard married Kezia Moffatt (born about 1843), who was also from St Columb, and by the 1891 census they had moved to Sherborne, near Cirencester, in Gloucestershire.⁸

In the 1901 census, the 23 year old Edward was recorded as living in Aston in Warwickshire, as a boarder.⁹ However, in 1903 Edward married, in the Cotswold town of Kings Norton, Dorothy Catherine Stephens (1874-16 Sept 1925). By the time of the 1911 census, Edward and Dorothy were living in 17 Claremont Road, Leamington, with John, his sister Phyllis Dorothy (then aged 5),¹⁰ and Dorothy's mother (Catherine Stephens, then a widow aged 68).¹¹ Another sister, Mary, was born later in 1914.

Very little is reported about Edward. He was sent to boarding school in Llandovery College and, after beginning his journalistic career in 1885 with the *Warwick Advertiser*, in 1909 he became editor of the *Leamington Spa Courier*, which was founded in 1828.¹² He still remains the longest serving editor of the *Courier*, over

⁷ These are (with ages in 1881 given in parentheses): William H. (13); Frances, E. (12); Richard (10); Charles (8); Mary Kate (6); Arthur (5); Edward (3) and Ellen Laura (1). Two others, presumably servants, are resident: these are Elizabeth G. Stephens (24) and Grace A. Solomon (17).

⁸ Richard and Kezia had a daughter, Elizabeth, who was aged 8 in 1891. The sons William, Charles and Ernest are not recorded as being resident at the time of the census.

⁹ The head of the household was Jane E. Jones (aged 42), and the other boarders were Thomas A Wetherall (aged 22), Gilbert B Grant (aged 34) and William J. Price (aged 35). Hamouda (1993, p. 2) states that Edward, then employed by the *Warwick Advertiser*, was sent to Birmingham to obtain experience with the *Birmingham Post*.

¹⁰ Phyllis later published *A Quest of Ladies: The Story of a Warwickshire School* (Birmingham: Frank Jukes, 1949). This is the story of the school established by the Byerley sisters, later mainly run by Maria and Frances, first in Warwick before moving in 1817 to Barford House, and finally moving in 1824 to Avonbank in Stratford on Avon. The Byerley sisters were children of Thomas Bylerley (1748-1810), a nephew of Josiah Wedgwood (and a partner after returning in 1775 from America, where he was a schoolteacher in New York). A famous pupil of the school was the great novelist, Elizabeth Gaskell.

¹¹ Also living in the house was a 'companion', Ethel Wilmer (aged 24) and a servant, Ellen Philpot (aged 17). The same address is given as the place of death of John's mother in 1925.

¹² Matthews somewhat misleadingly states that he was a journalist and part proprietor of the *Warwick and Leamington Spa Courier*. The two founders of the *Courier*, John Fairfax (1804-1877) and James Sharp Senior, fell out almost immediately over political differences. Fairfax (the second son of William Fairfax and his wife Elizabeth, née Jesson, of Birmingham) then founded the *Leamington*

the period 1909 to 1944. He oversaw the move from the old Leamington Bank building to new premises in Bedford Street in 1921.¹³ One owner of the *Courier* towards the end of the nineteenth century was Frank Glover, who married the English composer, pianist and sometime reviewer, Ethel R. Harraden (1857-1917).¹⁴ It is possible that Edward became a part proprietor with Glover.¹⁵

In addition to his journalistic work, Edward was involved with revising a number of books published by the Courier Press, and originally written by C.J. Ribton-Turner.¹⁶ It seems likely that Edward helped John obtain a job with the Manchester Guardian after John completed his degree at Oxford, but this lasted only a matter of months and Matthews reports, not surprisingly, that it was ‘not congenial’.

2.1.2 John’s Mother: Dorothy Catherine Hicks

As mentioned above, John’s mother was Dorothy Catherine, nee Stephens, who was born in 1874 in Ecclesall Bierlow, which is part of Sheffield. Dorothy died in 1925. This was the year in which John Hicks took his final examinations in Oxford. In discussing his disappointing degree performance, the illness and death of his mother were never mentioned by John.

Chronicle. He successfully defended a libel suit but was unable to meet costs and had to apply to the Insolvency Court. With his wife, mother and three children, Fairfax migrated to Sydney, arriving on 26 September 1838 in the Lady Fitzherbert with only £5. He subsequently went on to become proprietor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. In 1851 he paid his creditors in full, despite having an honourable discharge.

¹³ I am grateful to Chris Lillington, the current editor of the *Leamington Spa Courier*, for this information.

¹⁴ Ethel was sued for libel, for £50, by Edith McAlpine after a review of her concert given in Leamington on 7 February 1893. See *The Musical Times*, 1 June 1893 (Volume 34, no. 604, p. 338).

¹⁵ In a book entitled *Baxter Prints*, the author B.H. Morgan stated, ‘I desire to acknowledge the help of my many friends in the compilation of this book, and in particular to Mr. Horton Harrild, Mr. Frederick Harrild, Mr. Arthur Waters and to Mr. Frank Glover and Mr. Edward Hicks, who have read the Proofs and taken the rough output of my in-experienced pen, and clothed it with whatever style it may be found to possess’. The book was published by Courier Press in 1919. The book is about the prints produced by George Baxter (1804-1867).

¹⁶ These include *Shakespeare’s Land Being a Description of Central and Southern Warwickshire*, revised in 1932. Another is *Kenilworth Castle and Town: With Plan and Illustrations*. These publications are not mentioned by Hamouda (1993, p. 2), who does, however, refer to Edward’s book, *Sir Thomas Malory: His Turbulent Career* (1928, Harvard University Press).

Dorothy Catherine Hicks's father was John Mortimer Stephens, a Baptist minister who was born in 1843 in Bath and died on 6 October 1895 in Bristol. J.M. Stephens was named after his father (born about 1818). His mother was Sophia (born about 1824). In the 1851 census the elder J.M. Stephens and Sophia are recorded as living in Cirencester with three children, the younger J.M. (then aged 7), Ann Eliza (then aged 4) and Sarah Mary (aged 3).¹⁷

In 1867 the younger John Mortimer Stephens married Catherine (1843-28 April 1929) in Cirencester, and by the 1871 census they had their first daughter, Sophia Charlotte Winifred (1870-1944), who was known as Winifred.¹⁸ After a period in Sheffield, by 1881 they are recorded as living at 76, Gloucester Street in Elswick, Northumberland. They had, in addition to Winifred, a son (also called John Mortimer, aged 9) and two daughters, Dorothy Catherine (aged 6) – John Hicks's mother – and Edith Mortimer (aged 3).¹⁹ By 1891 they had moved to Hereford, and another son, Reginald (then aged 7) had been born.²⁰ When J.M. Stephens died in 1895, Catherine moved the family to Birmingham. Here Dorothy attended extension lectures on Dante.²¹

Hence it was in Birmingham that Dorothy and Edward met. On their marriage Edward became a Baptist, and John Hicks was brought up in the religion. For a time Catherine Stephens lived with Edward and Dorothy, but by the time of her death in 1929, she was living in Worcestershire with Winifred, to whom she left her estate.²²

2.1.3 John's Aunt Winifred

The correspondence between John Hicks and Ursula Webb, dating from shortly before their marriage and edited by Marcuzzo and Sanfilippo (2006), makes it clear that John was very close to his Aunt Winifred. Indeed, John and Ursula's

¹⁷ Other members of the household included Edward M. Locke (aged 11), James B. Ransford (aged 10) and Susanna Brindell (aged 25).

¹⁸ Other members of the household included Selina Carta (aged 19) and Eliza James (aged 14).

¹⁹ Also resident in the house were Anna Claffer (aged 40) and Marion Sinclair (aged 21).

²⁰ The census also records an Anna Clupper (aged 50), which suggests that there is at least one transcription error in Claffer/Clupper (see previous footnote). Also in the household was Annie Jones (aged 17).

²¹ See Hamouda (1993, p. 3).

²² However, Hamouda (1993, p. 2) suggests that Catherine lived with Dorothy until her death.

wedding reception was held at 27 Pont Street in London, the home of Winifred.²³ By that time Winifred was the widow of George Whale (1849-1925); their marriage was in 1923.²⁴ Following schooling in Provence (in a 'remote Cevennes community',²⁵), she had a long and distinguished career as a translator, biographer, historian and editor. It is easy to imagine her broad interests and international sympathies affecting the young John Hicks.

The list of her publications is too long to give here, but includes translations of several books by Anatole France, her own biographical works such as *The La Tremoille Family* and *Women of the French Revolution*, along with *Margaret of France Duchess of Savoy 1523-1574* and *French Novelists of Today*. To these may be added her books *From the Crusades to the French Revolution* and *Madame Adam (Juliette Lamber) La Grand Francaise from Llouis Philippe Until 1917*. Her wide international sympathies are indicated by edited works such as *The Soul of Russia*, and *Legends of Indian Buddhism*, and her translation of *The Turkish Problem: Things seen and a few Deductions* (by Count Leon Ostrorog). Her sympathies are exemplified by her editing of *The Book of France*, published in 1915 'in aid of the French parliamentary Committee's Fund for the Relief of the Invaded Departments'.²⁶ The list of Committee members makes interesting reading, and includes among others A.J. Balfour, Austen Chamberlin, Winston Churchill, Lady Randolph Churchill and novelists such as Thomas Hardy, Henry James, Kipling and H.G. Wells, along with her future husband George Whale. Her love of France is expressed in her moving personal memoir, *The France I Know* (1918).²⁷

Winifred's range of contacts was clearly extremely wide. In addition to her publishing activities, she was a member (and secretary) of the English Committee

²³ This is just south of Hyde Park, not far from the famous department store, Harrods.

²⁴ At the time of George Whale's death in 1925, the address was given as 49 York Terrace, Regents Park.

²⁵ See her book, *The France I Know* (1918, p. 4).

²⁶ Her introduction states that the aims are 'to raise money for French sufferers from German barbarity' and to forge 'a new link' between France and England.

²⁷ In this book, she discusses 'seven visits to France in War-time: three in the winter, spring, and summer of 1915, two in 1916, one in the autumn of 1917 and one in the spring of 1918' (1918, p. vii).

which selected a short list of books for the Femina Vie Heureuse literary prize.²⁸ The committee members included, among others, the writers Rebecca West,²⁹ Rosamond Lehmann and Kate O'Brien.

The range of contacts was even more extensive when it is recognised that, following their marriage in 1923, Winifred's husband George Whale had a very wide range of friends.³⁰ He had a highly successful career as a solicitor and was an eager book collector. A good indication of George's character and range of friends can be obtained from the book *George Whale 1849-1925*, jointly edited by Winifred with Edward Clodd and Clement King Shorter.³¹ All the contributors to this volume mention Whale's sociability.³² Winifred (p. 50) wrote that, 'he early became a well-known figure in London literary circles. In his house on Shooter's Hill, later at Blackheath, and recently in Regent's Park, he delighted to gather friends far too numerous to mention, representing various phases of progressive thought. And more than one lasting literary friendship was formed between guests who first met beneath his hospitable roof'.

²⁸ The prize was named from the titles of two French magazines, *Femina* and *La Vie Heureuse*, whose publishers in 1904 established an annual prize for a French work of fiction, chosen by a committee of literary women. This was extended in 1919 to English works, and the English Committee submitted a short-list of three works to the French Committee, which decided the winner. The prize continued until 1939, and winners included Woolf's *To The Lighthouse*, Forster's *A Passage to India*, Gibbons's *Cold Comfort Farm*, and Graves's *Count Belisarius*.

²⁹ H.G. Wells has already been mentioned in connection with *The Book of France*, and is discussed further below. It is well-known that one of Wells's many affairs was with Rebecca West, who bore their son.

³⁰ George Whale had earlier married, in 1874, Matilda Mary Ann Lawson (1850-1922). They had three children, Matilda Winifred (born in 1875), George Harold Lawson (1876-1944) and Dorothy Lawson (born 1880). G.H.L. Whale was educated at Bradfield College, Jesus College Cambridge and St Bartholomew's Hospital, becoming an eminent surgeon for diseases of the ear, nose and throat, on which he published several books.

³¹ Published by Jonathan Cape in 1926. On p. 48 Winifred writes that 'By the time he was twenty-three, his library numbered one thousand volumes; at the time of his death, sixty thousand'. It is not known what became of this library.

³² When writing his book, *The Pretty Lady*, Arnold Bennett consulted George Whale. He wrote in his journal: 'Dined with George Whale at the N.L.C. [National Liberal Club] And in his great ugly sitting room took what I wanted from his large collection of notes on war superstitions for my novel. His notes were extremely interesting'.

George Whale served as Mayor of Woolwich and was a founder member of Omar Khayyam and Pepys Clubs.³³ Importantly, he was Chairman (1922-1925) of the Rationalist Press Association. This began in 1899 with the aim of publishing literature that was too anti-religious to be handled by mainstream publishers.³⁴ Indeed, George died suddenly of a heart attack while drawing a meeting of the Association to its close.

In his *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry on John Hicks, Matthews states that ‘there was a connection with the political scientist Graham Wallas’, but the nature of the connection is not explained. John made only one reference to Wallas, and that was in his paper from 1973 on ‘Recollections and Documents’ (written shortly before the announcement of his Nobel Prize).³⁵ He wrote in the first footnote that, ‘I turned to economics after I had taken my degree, through a fortunate contact I had with Graham Wallas, and through him with LSE’. It is perhaps surprising that such an important event was mentioned only once and in such a ‘low key’ way. Hamouda (1993, p. 7) mentions briefly that, ‘Graham Wallace [sic] ... to whom Hicks had been introduced by his Aunt Winifred in her home in London, urged Hicks to read economics’. However, it seems clear that the association between Winifred and Wallas arose through George Whale.

Wallas (1858-1932) was one of the four founders of the London School of Economics, where he was lecturer (1895-1914) and then Professor of Political Science (1914-1923). In the present context an important point is that Wallas was President of the Rationalist Press Association, of which, as mentioned above, George Whale was Chairman. He frequently gave lectures to the Association. Hence Wallas and Whale obviously knew each other and worked together in the Association, and it is therefore most likely that John Hicks’s crucial meeting with Wallas arose from the George Whale connection.

³³ The Omar Khayyam Club was started, at a dinner at Pagani’s Restaurant on 13 September 1892, by Frederic Hudson, Clement Shorter and George Whale. The Pepys club was formed following a dinner at the Garrick Club on 26 May 1903, by George Whale, Sir Frederick Bridge, Sir D’Arcy Power and Henry Wheatley (editor of the 3rd edition of the diary).

³⁴ It began as the Propagandist Press Committee in 1890, started by Charles Watts and George Jacob Holyoake. In 2002 the name was again changed to The Rationalist Association.

³⁵ See *Economica*, February 1973, pp. 2-11. This was an issue devoted to papers presented at a 1972 conference convened at Merton College to honour John.

In addition, a further indirect link may be mentioned. Wallas was for many years a friend and mentor of H.G. Wells.³⁶ Wells was, in turn, a good friend of George Whale, as Wells himself makes clear in his contribution to *George Whale 1849-1925*. He writes (p. 45) that, ‘I was delighted to go and dine with Whale in that happy home in Regent’s Park whither he went after his second marriage. ... It was a very graceful, pleasant, bookish home. ... Almost the last I saw of him was at my house at Little Easton. They came for a week-end’.

2.2 Education

When discussing his education, Hicks simply mentions that he had a very good general schooling. Matthews states only that he ‘received much stimulus from the head of his preparatory school, Grey Friars [sic], near Leamington Spa – more stimulus, probably, than he received from his public [that is, private] school, Clifton College’.

After early tuition from John’s parents at home, he was sent to Warwick School between the ages of 9 and 11, and then to Greyfriars for the next two years, where he became a favourite of the headmaster, Alfred Beaven Beaven.³⁷ Beaven had been a student at Exeter and then Pembroke College, Oxford. Before being headmaster at Greyfriars he was an assistant master at King’s School Bruton in 1871, and then a master at Worcester Cathedral School 1872-1874, before becoming headmaster of Preston Grammar School in 1874. At Preston he appears to have acquired a reputation for producing excellent examination results with an ‘extremely rigorous’ regime. But a dwindling number of students seems to have led to his resignation in 1898.

Beaven was a Fellow of Royal Historical Society and displayed a taste for compiling various historical lists and biographies.³⁸ However, he must have attached considerable importance not only to historical studies but to mathematics. He had five

³⁶ On the close relationship between Wells and Wallas, see Stone, W.F. and Smith, D.C. (1983) ‘Human nature in politics: Graham Wallas and the Fabians’, *Political Psychology*, 4, pp. 693-712.

³⁷ See Hamouda (1993, p. 4), who reports that the move to Greyfriars, despite the high cost, was encouraged by Winifred.

³⁸ His publications include: *The Aldermen of the City of London* (London: E. Fisher, 1908-13) and *Bristol Lists: Municipal and Miscellaneous* (Bristol: Taylor and Hawkins, 1899).

sons, all of whom had careers as mathematicians. One of them, Harold Castlereagh Beaven, went on to teach John mathematics at Clifton College. Another son, Alfred Disraeli Park Beaven, became senior maths master at Wakefield School.³⁹

The hard work and rigorous training at Greyfriars clearly helped John to obtain a scholarship to Clifton College.⁴⁰ This school had then, and continues to have, an outstanding academic reputation. At the time, it was most unusual in stressing training in sciences and mathematics. A number of its teachers had in fact been top Cambridge Wranglers. The school can boast three Nobel prizewinners. In addition to John Hicks, there is John Kendrew (chemistry) and Nevill Francis Mott (physics). Mott (1905-1996) was obviously a contemporary of Hicks and became Master of Gonville and Caius College (also John's college during his brief time at Cambridge in the late 1930s), before obtaining his Nobel prize in 1977.

Historians of economics will know that Alfred Marshall, also a mathematics Wrangler at Cambridge, taught mathematics at Clifton College for a short time on an informal basis. A mathematics teacher during John Hicks's time at Clifton, William Proctor Milne (1881-1967), went on to a chair of mathematics at Leeds University in 1919. The transition from teaching at Clifton to university professor was indeed not uncommon for that fine school, but in a wider context it is indeed remarkable. An earlier headmaster during the period 1879 to 1890 was Edward Pears Wilson (1836-1931), who served as President of the UK Mathematics Association in 1921, and wrote a number of introductory mathematics texts.⁴¹

With such strong coaching in mathematics over the whole of his time at school, John was able to win the Sebag Montifiore scholarship to Balliol, which he

³⁹ A.D.P. Beaven died in Burma, at the prisoner of war camp at Thanbyuz and was buried at the Ayat War Cemetery. Two other sons were Cecil Livingston Beaven and Murray L.R. Beaven.

⁴⁰ The Clifton College headmaster over the period 1909-1923 was John David King. Field Marshal Douglas Haig was an Old Cliftonian who went on to command the British armed forces in the First World War. In the Second World War, some of the college's buildings were used as the main HQ where the D-Day landings were planned.

⁴¹ Another teacher was H.S. Hall, who wrote bestselling mathematics texts. Also overlapping with Hicks at Clifton was the famous statistician Frank Yates (1902-1994), who worked with R.A. Fisher. Yates won his scholarship in 1916. For further details of the development of science teaching at (among other schools) Clifton College, and attempts to improve science teaching in general, see Pippard, B. (2002) Schoolmaster-fellows and the campaign for science education. *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, 56, pp. 63-81.

entered in 1922, to study mathematics. Hamouda (1993, p. 6) reports that he found the maths in his first year in Oxford to be mainly a repetition of material covered at Clifton and, after winning an essay prize for a paper on Shakespeare, was told that he need not continue with mathematics. This is despite the fact, as Matthews reports, that he obtained a first in moderations in 1923. Hence, he changed subjects to the recently created degree course in Politics Philosophy and Economics (PPE). He reported that he 'had interests in literature and in history which I needed to satisfy',⁴² but he was advised that his mathematics background would be useful for the study of economics and, as economics was an expanding subject, he would have better chances of employment.

This advice contrasts sharply with that given to Henry Phelps Brown, who in the early 1920s won a history scholarship at Wadham College. The economic historian, R.V. Lennard, suggested that it would be wise to study history rather than PPE because the latter was not well organized.⁴³ Indeed, some idea of the nature of PPE at that time may be obtained from Robbins, who had to teach on the course. Writing in his autobiography, Robbins commented that he thought the conception was good, but 'the realization was truly lamentable. There was virtually no organization, no co-ordination to present a balanced course of teaching. ... It was quite possible for the university lecture list to present two or three courses covering the same subject, while other equally important fields remained without any coverage at all.'⁴⁴ Robbins went on to say that the course was dominated by philosophy and 'amateurishness and superficiality in the other subjects'.⁴⁵

⁴² See Hicks, J.R. (1992) *Autobiography*. In *Nobel Lectures, Economics 1969-1980* (Edited by A. Lindbeck. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing). His change of degree is also discussed in Hicks, J.R. (1979) The formation of an economist, *Banca Nazionale del Lavoro Quarterly Review*, September. In a later interview he said that 'they told me to change over to [PPE] rather than to history, which I would have preferred, because, they said, my mathematics would be of some use in PPE'; see p. 168 of Klamer, A. (1989) An accountant among economists: conversations with Sir John R. Hicks, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 3, pp. 167-180.

⁴³ See Worswick, D. (1996) Ernest Henry Phelps Brown 1906-1994. *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 90, pp. 319-344.

⁴⁴ See p. 111 of Robbins, L. (1971) *Autobiography of an Economist*. London: Macmillan.

⁴⁵ Of the university at that time, Robbins also commented that 'little suspicion of any sort of inadequacy disturbed the serene self-confidence of the dominant majority, although in fact there was

Whatever the causes, the failure to obtain a first class degree in 1925 was a clear disappointment, and Matthews also reports that he unsuccessfully sat a fellowship examination for All Souls. Hicks returned to Oxford to complete a B.Litt on 'skill differentials in the building and engineering trades', a topic in labour history.⁴⁶ The topic, along with the encouragement to study economics, mentioned above, was suggested by Graham Wallas. It was after this postgraduate year, and several months as a junior reporter on the *Manchester Guardian*, that Hicks applied for a temporary teaching position, as assistant lecturer, to the London School of Economics. It seems likely that he owed this position, which was regularly renewed until he was given a lectureship, to the influence of Graham Wallas.

His research on skill differences involved very little economics, so that his serious education in economics surprisingly did not really begin until he moved to the London School of Economics in 1926.⁴⁷ To the modern academic economist, it is startling that anyone would be appointed to a lectureship (though it was initially temporary) with such a thin background in the subject. And it is no wonder that Hicks made a slow start in publishing, after what must have been an intense period of self-education.⁴⁸

much both in organization and intellectual tradition that was open to criticism' (*Autobiography*, p. 110).

⁴⁶ The B.Litt is based on a thesis, with no examinations. Hicks was supervised by G.D.H. Cole. Matthews states that he obtained the B.Litt in 1927, but Hamouda (1993, p. 7) writes that it was completed during one academic year 1935-1936, for which he had obtained (with the help of A.D. Lindsay, the Master of Balliol) a War Memorial Student scholarship.

⁴⁷ Curiously, Coase, R.H. (1994) *Essays on Economics and Economists*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press), suggests on p. 210 that Hicks went to LSE in 1928. In fact he spent the academic year 1928-9 teaching at the University of Witwatersrand, in South Africa. He travelled to South Africa on the same ship as W.H. Hutt (1899-1988) who was taking up a senior lectureship at Cape Town. Hutt had continued to attend LSE lectures, while working for the publisher Sir Ernest Benn, after his graduation there in 1924. Herbert Frankel, who was professor of economics at Witwatersrand 1930-1946, moved to Nuffield in 1946 and initially stayed in the Hicks's flat in Oxford.

⁴⁸ After two economic history pieces in *Economica* which probably came from his B.Litt thesis, Hicks published his first economics paper in 1930, on 'Edgeworth, Marshall and the indeterminateness of wages', in the *Economic Journal*, 40, pp. 215-231. However, this consists of a summary of the separate contributions, rather than containing new analysis.

3 Ursula's Background

Ursula Kathleen Webb was born on 17 February 1896 at 'Clondillure', in Upper Rathmines, Dublin.⁴⁹ She died in 1985. Ursula's family background is in many ways more extensive and interesting than that of John, and is dominated by the prominent Irish Quaker families, Webb, Fisher and Shackleton. It can only be partially explored here: further details are given in the Appendix.

Her father was the successful Dublin lawyer William Fisher Webb.⁵⁰ He was born on 29 May 1859, and died on 16 June 1924 at Sussex after a long illness during which Ursula helped her mother to look after him. William was the youngest son of James Webb (1797-1878) and Susanna (nee Fisher) (1816-1906), who were both members of prominent Irish Quaker families. William had two older sisters, Edith and Gertrude, both of whom were teachers and remained unmarried. Edith taught at the Mount School York (a Quaker school) before teaching at the highly regarded Alexandra School in Dublin. Gertrude established a kindergarten in Dublin, which Ursula attended before going to the Alexandra School. From there she was sent, at her mother's wish, to Roedean.

Ursula's mother, Isabella Mary (nee Hayward) was born on 16 May 1865 in Limerick, and died on 2 May 1931 in Surrey.⁵¹ Isabella had a good education in England.⁵² This included the period 1877-1881 at the 'Boys and Girls' school, a Quaker school in Sidcot, followed by The Mount School in York from 1881-1883.

⁴⁹ The house is now a 'bed and breakfast', or B&B.

⁵⁰ His practice was initially at 38 Dame Street, Dublin, which is very close to Trinity College Dublin. Their home address in the 1911 census is 2 Highfield Road, Dublin. In 1910 he established a partnership with his younger cousin Leonard Webb, at 1 Suffolk Street, Dublin. This partnership was dissolved on 12 August 1915, when it seems that William and his wife moved to England. William's interests clearly extended beyond the law. For example, on 12 December 1913 he gave a paper to the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland on 'Commercial education in Ireland'. It was read by the Solicitor-General, Jonathan Pim. The Dublin economists John Kells Ingram and Richard Whately were earlier closely involved with the Society.

⁵¹ Her address was 'Dromaneen', in Chichester Road, Oxted, Surrey. The house was presumably named after the castle in County Cork, one of the castles formerly owned by the O'Callaghan family (William Fisher Webb's great grandmother was Mary O'Callaghan).

⁵² In the 1871 census, she is listed as living with her grandfather, Joseph Hayward, in Whetsone, Finchley.

Finally Isabella studied at University College London, graduating in 1893 with a BSc in Botany and Physiology.

Isabella and William were married on 22 December 1893 at Torquay.⁵³ They met when Isabella was staying in Ireland with William's family, while on holiday. In fact the partial family trees shown in the Appendix indicate that William was marrying the daughter of his first cousin. Marriages between cousins, and across generations, were not uncommon in the three families involved.

A prominent member of the extensive Webb family was Alfred Webb (10 June 1834-31 July 1908).⁵⁴ Alfred travelled widely, including an early trip to Australia during 1853-1855. This trip was partly for his health, and must have been successful as he walked from Melbourne to Sydney before sailing home.⁵⁵ Alfred also travelled to Iceland in 1861 with his cousin, Joseph Shackleton⁵⁶ and shortly afterwards married his cousin (and Joseph's sister) Elizabeth Shackleton (1834-1907). Elizabeth was from the Ballitore Quaker community, near Dublin, the most famous

⁵³ Apparently William's older brother Frederick wanted to marry Isabella's younger sister, Alice, but her father refused on the grounds that Frederick was 15 years older than Alice and was 'drifting' in his career (though later he was a doctor and practiced in Manchester). Isabella's father was William Hayward (born in London 1830 and died in Torquay 1917), and her mother was Elizabeth (nee Alexander). Elizabeth's parents were Samuel Alexander, of Limerick, and Isabella (nee Fisher). And Samuel was in turn the son of Edward Alexander and Jenepher (nee Fisher). Hence Ursula's paternal grandmother (Susanna) was initially a Fisher, as was her maternal great-grandmother (Isabella) and great-great-grandmother. In fact Susanna and Isabella were sisters, so that William Fisher Webb married the daughter of his first cousin, Elizabeth (nee Alexander). The Alexanders were also Quakers.

⁵⁴ Alfred's uncle was Thomas Webb, who was married to Mary (nee Fisher, another of the Fisher sisters mentioned in the previous footnote), who was the aunt of William Fisher Webb, Ursula's father. Joseph Webb, who was the brother of Richard Webb (William Fisher Webb's grandfather) was Alfred Webb's great grandfather. Hence Alfred Webb's father was William Fisher Webb's second cousin), and they also shared an aunt and uncle.

⁵⁵ See *The Autobiography of a Quaker Nationalist*, edited by Marie-Louise Legg (1999), Cork University Press. Disappointingly this omits much of Webb's discussion of his family background. Further information is in Regan-Lefebvre, J. (2009) *Cosmopolitan Nationalism in the Victorian Empire: Ireland, India and the Politics of Alfred Webb*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁵⁶ See Stone, I.R. (2004) Joseph Shackleton in Iceland 1861, *Polar Record*, 41, pp. 157-159. For Shackleton's account see Stone, I.R. (2005) The text of Joseph Shackleton's account of his visit to Iceland 1861, *Polar Record*, 41, pp. 223-234.

member being the explorer Ernest Henry Shackleton.⁵⁷ Alfred Webb was energetic and wide-ranging, taking over his father's printing business, publishing articles and books⁵⁸ as well as being a member of parliament, and campaigning against slavery, like his remarkable parents Richard Davis and Hannah Webb (nee Waring), who were also in contact with American abolitionists. Widely respected, Alfred had the considerable honour of being invited to preside at the 10th Indian National Congress in Madras in 1894.

Hence it is easy to see that Ursula's background reflected a combination of Quaker ideals, business enterprise, education, extensive travel, and strong and colourful personalities. Viewed in this light, it is not so surprising that she should display a strong leadership and organisational role, with wide international sympathies.

4 Porch House in Blockley

After John and Ursula moved to Oxford in 1946, and John took up the Nuffield College fellowship, their main residence was Porch House in the Cotswold village of Blockley, although they also maintained a flat in Oxford. The house was previously owned by George and Winifred Whale, and was left to John by Winifred.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ The Quaker school at Ballitore, started by Abraham Shackleton (1696-1771) in 1726, had as its most famous pupil Edmund Burke, who went from there to Trinity College Dublin in 1744. Elizabeth's father was George Shackleton (21 August 1785-1 July 1871) and her mother was Hannah (nee Fisher), the daughter of Joseph Fisher (1774-1830) and Hannah (nee Mark). Here is another Fisher connection. Elizabeth's grandfather was Abraham Shackleton (1752-1818), who took over the running of Ballitore school, started by his grandfather and namesake, and whose half-sister was Mary Leadbeater. In the first of a series of pedagogic books, Mary published *Cottage Dialogues among the Irish Peasantry*, in 1811. This contained an introduction and notes by Maria Edgeworth, the aunt of the economist Francis Ysidro Edgeworth. One of Mary's six children, Lydia, married into the Fisher family.

⁵⁸ Among his publications is a huge *Compendium of Irish Biography* (1878, Dublin: M. H. Gill and Son). A digital version of this book can be accessed at the Library Ireland web site: <http://www.libraryireland.com/biography/index.php>.

⁵⁹ See Marcuzzo et al. (2006), who suggest that the house, along with a magnificent library, was left to John by Winifred. Colin Simkin writes incorrectly that it was left to John's sister, from whom Ursula bought it; see Simkin, C. (2001) John and Ursula Hicks—a personal recollection. In *John*

Porch House was subsequently bought by Ursula, who bequeathed it to Linacre College, where Ursula was a foundation Fellow, ‘after John’s life tenancy expired’.⁶⁰ Her hope was that the house would be used as a quiet study environment for students to work in the country. But Linacre subsequently sold Porch House and named one of their buildings, 105 Banbury Road, after Lady Ursula Hicks.⁶¹

Except for their many overseas trips, Porch House provided their main home for 40 years. John also encouraged the economic historian T.S. Ashton (1889-1968) to move to Blockley in retirement, where he lived in ‘Tredwells’. Similarly, he encouraged his former student G.B. Richardson, who also replaced John as an Oxford University Press Delegate, to return to Oxford and buy a house in Blockley.⁶² Klammer mentions that when he went to interview John in 1988 in Porch House, he approached the local shopkeeper for directions and reports that, ‘when he finally realized whom I was looking for, he exclaimed, “Oh, he is quite a recluse, you know. He got a Nobel

Hicks: His Contributions to Economic Theory and Application (edited by K. Puttaswamaiah), pp. 5-14. London: Transaction Publishers.

⁶⁰ Simkin repeats the suggestion, which appears in various sources, that Porch House was initially a Bishop’s residence, but this suggestion is now discounted.

⁶¹ There is some uncertainty about the fate of the Hicks’s library. For discussion of John Hicks’s papers, see the discussion in Marcuzzo and Sanfilippo (2006, pp. 120-129). It is mentioned that the University of Hyogo holds something like 1,200 books, but this can only be a fraction of the total number. Part of the library was left by John to All Souls College, while other books, along with his papers, were bequeathed to his former secretary, Patricia Utechin, and those books were subsequently sold. Utechin (1928-2008) had also worked for Max Beloff and Isaiah Berlin. Access to material held by the John Hicks Foundations appears to be extremely difficult.

⁶² See Schuller, A.L. (2008) Hicks and his publishers. In *Markets, Money and Capital: Hicksian Economics for the Twenty-first Century* (ed. by R. Scazzieri, A. Sen and S. Zamagni). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 92-108. John Hicks’s relationship with Oxford University Press extended over fifty years. For twenty of those, until 1971 when new rules limited terms of office, he was a Delegate and member of the Finance Committee (a subcommittee of Delegates). Six of his books were published during his period as a Delegate and, with Richardson taking his place as Delegate (and becoming Secretary, that is chief executive, in 1974), Schuller comments that ‘Hicks’s relations with his main publisher were considerably closer and more complex than normal’. However, some of his later books were published by Blackwells who were, under the influence of René Olivieri, much more dynamic and aggressive at that time.

Prize, eh? Isn't that interesting!'"'.⁶³ However, this comment by one resident cannot be taken at face value. Even after Ursula died, John travelled, with assistance, to overseas conferences and carried out an extensive correspondence with economists all over the world. He was rather frail and had for some time been unsteady on his feet, commenting to Samuelson that 'fortunately I am dying from my feet up rather than from my brain down'.⁶⁴

The house is a large Grade II listed property with a large garden, in which both John and Ursula took much interest. Wolfe (1968, p. x) reports that John was at one time responsible for laying out parts of Nuffield College gardens and, 'on one occasion he went directly from an important meeting to the gardens to supervise the planting of some new rose bushes. An eminent international trade theorist who happened to be present and who witnessed this operation earned the ire of Ursula Hicks by commenting upon the difficulty of reconciling this activity with the theory of comparative advantage'.

The house has an interesting history.⁶⁵ Tree-ring dating of roof timbers suggests that the most likely period of construction is 1535-1540, but the name and general appearance date from the 17th century.⁶⁶ An early owner was Elizabeth Martyn, who lived there from 1713 until her death in 1747, having moved from the

⁶³ See p. 176 in Klamer, A. (1989) *An accountant among economists: conversations with Sir John R. Hicks*, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 3, pp. 167-180.

⁶⁴ See p. 4 of Samuelson, P.A. (2001) *My John Hicks*. In *John Hicks: His Contributions to Economic Theory and Application*, edited by K. Puttaswamaiah (London: Transaction Publishers), pp. 1-4.

⁶⁵ John and Ursula also owned the house next door to Porch House, which they called 'Puffers'. It was once The Railway Inn, which was built in 1850 to accommodate the needs of 'navvies' working on the new railway line (the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway – popularly referred to as 'Old Worse & Worse'). The navvies were not welcome in the other village inns. It was a Donnington Ales (Arkeil) House run for many years by George and Olive Cox. The Blockley Riot of 1878 was attributed to the excessive number of public houses in the village, along with over-zealous behaviour by the police. The famous prophet and visionary, Joanna Southcott (1750-1814), married, near the end of her life, a Blockley resident called John Smith (1758-1829).

⁶⁶ See Bridge, M.C. (2008) *The tree-ring dating of timbers from Porch House, St George's Terrace, Blockley, Gloucestershire*. *Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory Report 2008/28*. For a detailed description of the house, containing plans and photographs, see Rodwell, K.A. (2008) *The history and structural development of Porch House, Blockley, Gloucestershire*.

nearby Upton Wold on her husband's death in 1713.⁶⁷ After Elizabeth Martyn, the house was owned by Lieutenant-Colonel Melchior Guy Dickens (1696-1775), a distinguished British diplomat, minister to Prussia and Sweden and ambassador to Russia. He was involved in a dispute with his Blockley neighbour, Edward Collier, who was accused of blocking a drain running through his land.⁶⁸ Collier's son was Admiral Sir Edward Collier (1783-1872), who was born in Blockley and returned to live there after a highly successful career in the navy.⁶⁹

It is not known to what extent the historian part of John investigated the history of Porch House. But it is clear that it provided a quiet haven for John and Ursula's close partnership, and a perfect environment for an undisturbed working regime.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Both Francis and Elizabeth gave, in their wills, donations to support charity schools in Blockley. In addition, their daughter Ann, who pre-deceased Elizabeth, also gave money for the poor in Blockley. A later owner of Porch House, Thomas Horne, gave in 1845 a new building for a school in nearby Morton-in-Marsh. Other Blockley residents who made charitable bequests include the aptly named Martha Scattergood and her father Rev. Samuel Scattergood (1646-1696).

⁶⁸ In fact Dickens was living at 66 Great Queen Street, London, between 1749 and 1751. Some sources suggest that he was still living in Porch House in 1779 when his son was buried in Blockley church. However, in his will dated 10 July 1775, he was living at Waddon in Croydon, Surrey. He gave instructions that his body should not be taken to Blockley but interred in a vault in the parish church in Croydon.

⁶⁹ He was buried in the chancel of the church, where there is a stained glass window in his memory. After retirement he served as a County Magistrate, and he also built the Police House in 1861 on 'Collier's Close'.

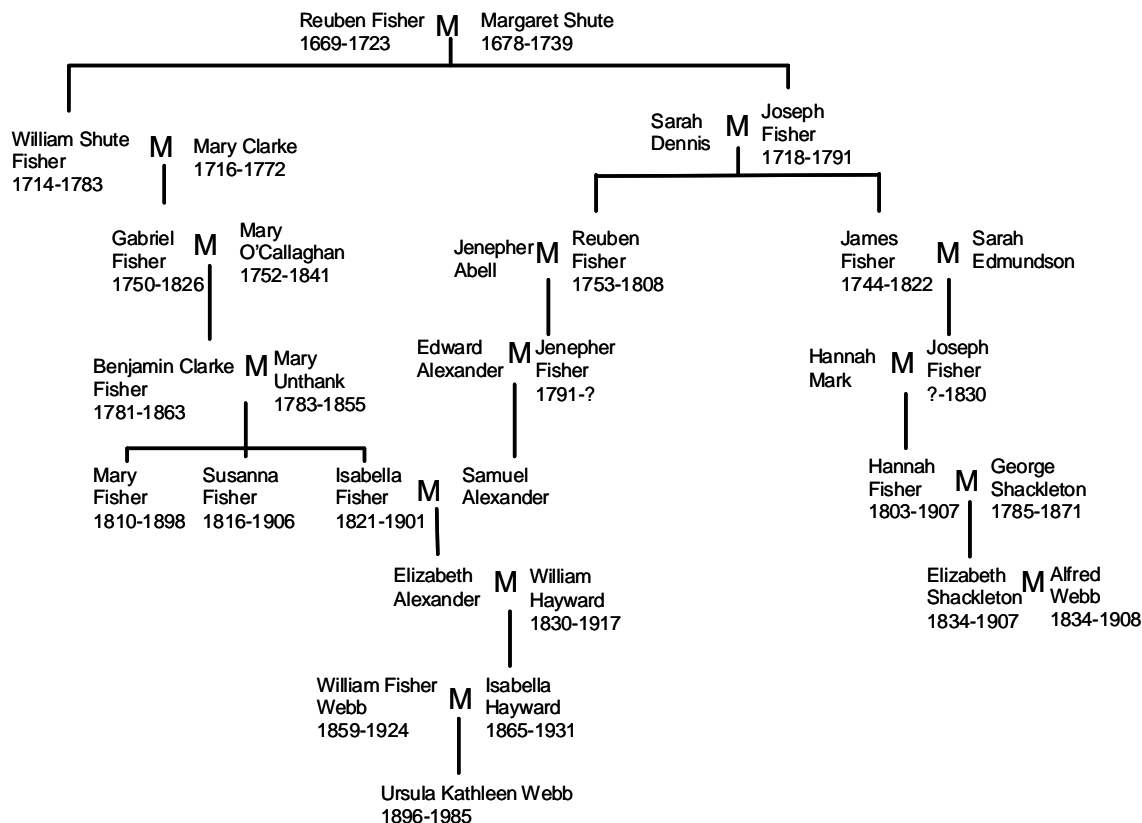
⁷⁰ The daily routine in Porch House is described on p. 319 of Lejonhufvud, A. (2001) In memoriam: John Hicks. In *John Hicks: His Contributions to Economic Theory and Application*, edited by K. Puttaswamaiah (London: Transaction Publishers), pp. 317-321. John wrote a large proportion of his total publications after his retirement in 1965.

Appendix: Some Family Connections of Ursula Webb

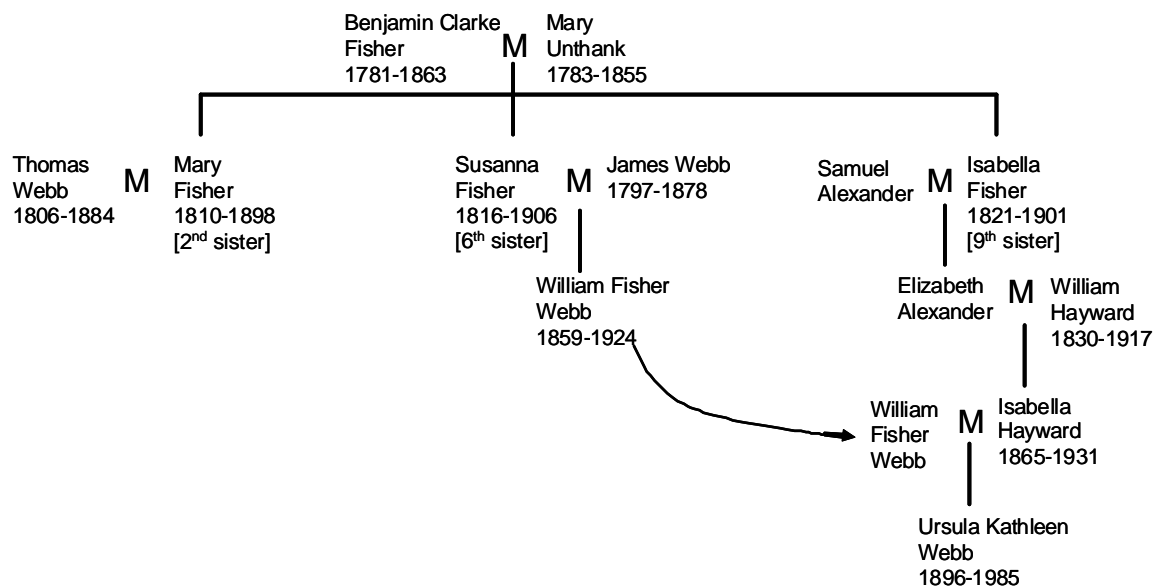
This appendix illustrates just some of the complex relationships among the Fisher, Shackleton and Webb families. The trees are considerably simplified and, for example, do not include all children of the marriages listed (for example, Hannah and George Shackleton had 13 children, but only Elizabeth is shown here). Also, the trees do not demonstrate how Alfred Webb is the cousin of his wife Elizabeth Shackleton, and how there were other connections (in addition to Elizabeth's parents, George Shackleton and Hannah Fisher) between Fishers and Shackletons, and between the latter and Webbs. However, from these trees it can be seen that: Isabella Fisher's father Benjamin was a second cousin of her mother-in-law, Jenepher; Ursula's paternal Grandmother Susanna was the older sister of Ursula's maternal great grandmother Isabella; Alfred Webb's aunt Mary (from the marriage of his father's brother Thomas) was the older sister of Ursula's maternal great grandmother Isabella; Ursula's paternal grandfather James had a cousin also called James Webb, who was the grandfather of Alfred Webb, who in turn married Elizabeth Shackleton, and Elizabeth's maternal grandfather was a cousin of Jenepher Fisher; Ursula's father married the daughter of his first cousin (Elizabeth Hayward, nee Alexander). The tree in Figure 4 shows that Norman Fitzroy Webb and Melanie Louisa Webb were cousins, and also cousins of Ursula. The invitations to John and Ursula's wedding were issued by 'Mr and Mrs N.F. Webb ... on the occasion of the marriage of their cousin Miss Ursula K. Webb'.⁷¹

⁷¹ A blank invitation is reproduced in Marcuzzo and Sanfilippo (2006, p. 91).

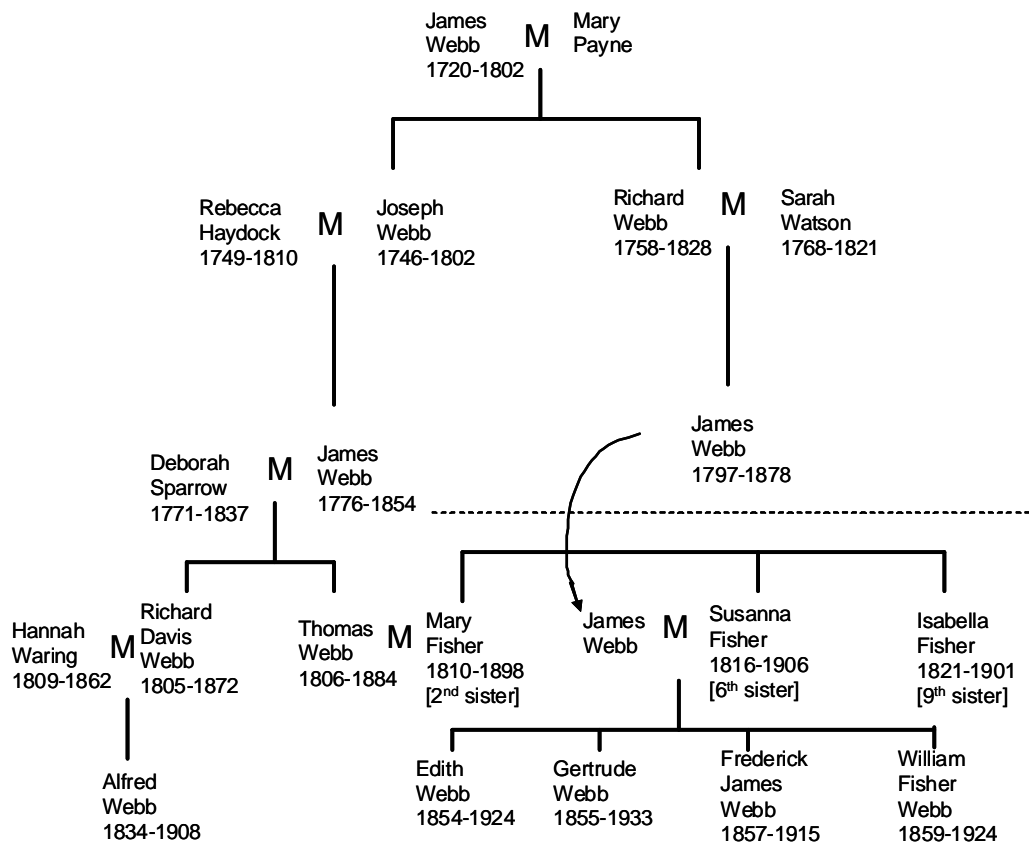
Webb, Fisher and Shackleton Connections: A



Webb, Fisher and Shackleton Connections: B



Webb, Fisher and Shackleton Connections: C



Webb, Fisher and Shackleton Connections: D

