

# THE WILKINSONS



## A dynasty of Upholders, Furniture Makers, House Brokers & Undertakers.

This “history” of the Wilkinson family covers several generations of Wilkinsons living in London and running the family business from the mid eighteenth to the late nineteenth century. Brief mention is also included of some of the family living in the latter half of the nineteenth century who are the direct ancestors of the authors.

### JOSHUA WILKINSON 1725 - 1790

Joshua Wilkinson was born in 1725 and is thought to have been the son of Joseph Wilkinson, a clothier of Leeds, Yorkshire. Joshua is believed to have had at least two brothers, William and Joseph. Joshua’s



St Leonard’s  
Shoreditch

wife was Sarah Brind, daughter of John Brind, a Loriner and Founder. Joshua and Sarah were married at St Leonard’s, Shoreditch on July 20<sup>th</sup> 1755. The baptismal records of their children are in the records of the same church. Their first child, John Wilkinson, was born in May 1756 and died in January of the following year. They subsequently had two daughters, Sarah (1758) and Elizabeth (1761) and three sons, Joshua junior born 1759, William born 1763 and John Henry born 1770. There were three other children who probably all died in childhood, including Thomas (b 1767; d 1769) and twins Mary and Martha (b 1764). The family lived in Moorfields throughout this time and their address is recorded as being “Broker Row” in the baptismal records for William and for Thomas and



St Leonard’s  
Shoreditch 2006

John Henry.

Joshua became a Freeman of the City of London, by virtue of admission to the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, by “Redemption” (nomination & payment), in 1756. He became a Liveryman of the Company in 1763. In general, membership of the livery companies “conferred social prestige, some business advantages, a share in deciding the political actions of the City of London and, in cases of distress and hardship, provided charitable assistance”. Joshua was neither a goldsmith nor a banker, so the business advantage in his case may simply have been that as a house broker he needed to be a ‘Freeman’ (automatically granted to members of a livery company) in order to own property in the City of London. There were several Brinds, presumably relatives of his wife, in the Goldsmiths Company and this may well have given him the necessary contacts to gain nomination for his admission. On the record of his admission there was a notation, in the margin, that he was “Son of Joseph, late of Leeds, Yorkshire, Clothier”.

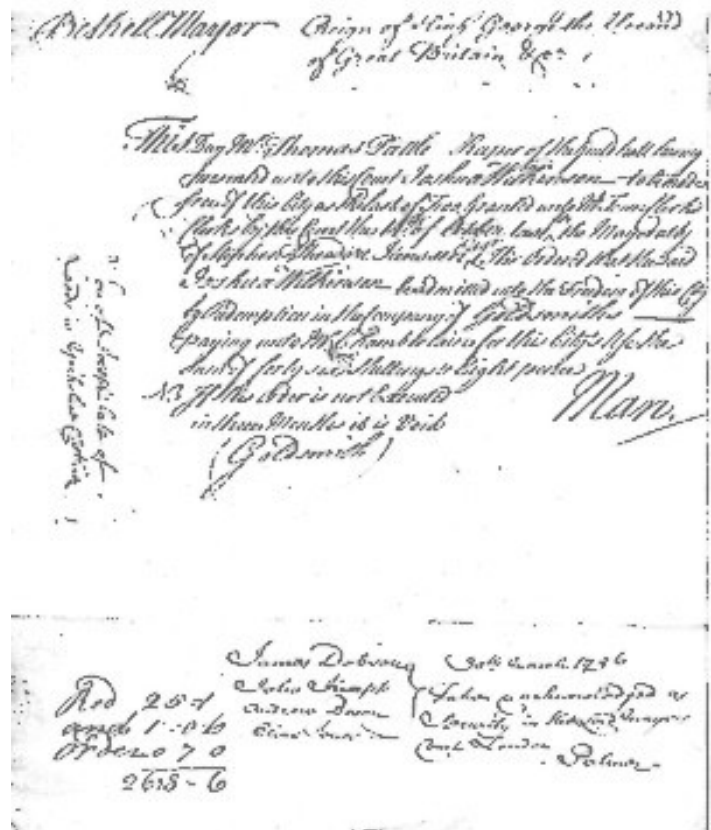


Coat of Arms of  
Goldsmiths Company

By 1766 Joshua Wilkinson is known to have been in business in Moorfields as an upholder, cabinet-maker and house broker. In the 18 century, Upholders upheld or undertook to furnish peoples’ houses, and were typically dealers, manufacturers, upholsterers and repairers of furniture, and were also often brokers and auctioneers. Great names in 18 century furniture such as Chippendale, Vile, Ince and Mayhew, were proud to call themselves upholders first and cabinet-makers second. Some of the larger upholders employed several hundred workers and were stockists of furniture, mirrors, fabrics, marble, wall-paper etc. and waited on clients, prepared designs and undertook the making, upholstering and

installation of furniture, draperies and blinds, and hanging of wall-paper. Upholders were pre-eminent in the furniture industry throughout the 18 and the first quarter of the 19 century, and the Worshipful Company of Upholders was the pre-eminent guild or company regulating the industry. However, some furniture makers belonged to other companies.

We know from apprenticeship records that Joshua's business was in Moorfields from at least 1766 to 1784, in which year his youngest son, John Henry, bound himself to his father, "Citizen and Goldsmith of London to learn his art of a Housebroker." Joshua made his fortune as a house broker and through the prosperous furniture business, which he ran with his eldest son Joshua Jnr and his younger brother Joseph, from at least 1778 – the company being registered as "Wilkinson and Sons". In that year he is recorded as taking out a licence to employ twenty non-freemen for three months at his upholders shop at 24 Exchange Alley. He did the same again in 1780 (having been forced by a fire to move to Cheapside). Stock and utensils at the Exchange Alley shop were valued at £300 out of a total insurance value of £1,500. Business must have thrived at the Cheapside shop because the insurance value of their stock and utensils there had increased within two years to £1,400 (out of a total cover of £2,100). From their Cheapside premises Wilkinson and Sons advertised themselves as a 'Cabinet, Upholstery, Carpet and Looking Glass Warehouse', and indicated that their stock included 'down, goose and other feather beds; Turkey, Brussels, Wilton, Kidderminster and Scotch carpets; library, writing, ladies' dressing, Pembroke card, and tea tables; cabriole, japanned and Windsor chairs etc.' By the number of men employed it is evident that there was a fairly extensive manufacturing side to their business.



Certificate of admission to Goldsmiths Company 1756

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, furniture making was a respectable occupation whose main centre in London was in the neighbourhood of St Paul's. At the beginning of the century there existed specialist cabinet-making shops, specialist gilders or upholsterers and so forth. From around 1740 all these various crafts were amalgamated and the general furniture shop or warehouse came into existence. The owner-managers of such shops, however, such as the Wilkinsons, were still called "upholders."

The Wilkinsons made a great deal of money from their furniture business and also from dealing in and renting out properties all over London. Upholder also meant undertaker and that too was part of their business. Their wealth had put them into the top reaches of the "comfortable middling classes" already by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. And in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century they were recognised as one of the main London furniture dealers. They ran their business as a family company, fathers, brothers and sons in partnership with each other and this tradition continued into the late nineteenth century.

After his retirement in about 1784, Joshua moved at first to Bush Hill in Middlesex and then came back closer to London to live on Highgate Hill, overlooking the City. The pew book of the old Highgate Chapel shows that he and his wife began to attend church there regularly from 1789 onwards. He died the following year on December 23. The death was recorded not only in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *European Magazine and London Review* but also in *The Times* which indicates that he was a person

of some standing. The notice simply read: “Mr Joshua Wilkinson of Highgate hill, upholster and cabinet maker, Moorfields.”

In his Will, which runs to fourteen pages, Joshua left his second daughter Elizabeth Cowdall (1761- ) two of the properties plus an annuity of £50. (Elizabeth’s husband, Joseph Cowdall, was a hosier at Mumford Court Milk Street, Cheapside). Relations were obviously strained with his eldest daughter Sarah (1758- ), or at least with her husband, Thomas Pearson, upholsterer, who owed Joshua money. For this reason he added a Codicil to the will reducing her settlement from £50 to £25 just before he died. To his three sons, Joshua Jnr (1759-1806 ), William (1763-1833), and John Henry (1770- ), he left £1000 each plus various of his many “leasehold messuages or tenements and appurtenances.” He entrusted £1000 to his brother William and his nephew Thomas Wilkinson, both of whom were upholders. The money was to be invested in the family upholders business in order to provide for his daughters’ and wife’s annuities. He also settled small sums on his grandsons (Joshua Jnr’s two sons), William James and Joshua Richard and his sister-in-law, Mary and his nephews, Thomas and William. To his wife Sarah he left all his other properties, his household goods, his linen, pictures, and plate, his horses, cows and carriages, plus a lump sum of £500 and an annuity of £500 payable in quarterly instalments until her death and thereafter to revert to the other legatees.

Sarah died in Stoke Newington in 1793. Her death was noticed in the *Gentleman’s Magazine*. She was buried next to her husband Joshua in the family vault at old Highgate Chapel. The memorial tablet stood before the Communion Table until 1833, in which year the chapel was pulled down to build the new Highgate School chapel. The family vault continued in use up to 1838.

In her Will she specified that her sons William and John Henry be appointed the undertakers at her funeral. The Will also contains detailed instructions for the disposal of large quantities of silver utensils including “three Mahogany knife Cases with Crests” left to John Henry. One wonders whether the ‘Crest’ mentioned was the same as that which has come down through several branches of the family over the subsequent generations, with a fox’s head carrying a goose wing in its mouth and the motto “Praesto et Persto” (“I stand in front and I stand fast”).

### WILLIAM WILKINSON 1763 - 1833

William Wilkinson, the second son of Joshua Sr. was born in Broker’s Row, London on May 20th 1763. It is probable that in the 1780s he worked as a cabinet-maker with his father in the premises at 7 Broker’s Row. In 1791 he married eighteen-year-old Jane Ayscough (1773-1838) at the old city church of St Giles, Cripplegate (today it is in the grounds of the Barbican). Jane was almost ten years younger than William. They had twelve children: Mary 1794, William Ayscough 1796, Jane Ayscough 1798, Charles 1800, Sarah 1803, Josiah 1804, Jane 1806, Thomas 1809, Alfred 1810, Francis and Hannah (twins) 1812, and Peter Richard 1814. Up until 1807 the family address was shown (on their baptismal records) as Broker’s Row, Moorfields, after which the address was 14 Ludgate Hill. This



St Giles, Cripplegate



St Giles, Cripplegate 2006

may have meant that William and Jane Wilkinson and their family resided at the same address as the business, perhaps an apartment over the premises below.

Jane’s younger sister, Elizabeth Ayscough, is also an ancestor of several Wilkinsons. She married Robert Meacock at St Giles, Cripplegate on June 26 1793 and two of her daughters, Eliza and Emma, married Wilkinson cousins – William Ayscough Wilkinson and Josiah (both sons of William and Jane).

Jane’s and Elizabeth’s father, William Ayscough (born circa 1745), was an undertaker whose business was at 1 Fore St, Cripplegate. The Ayscough business was

established in 1741, probably by his grandfather (also William Ayscough) and went down through successive generations of the family, including Jane & Elizabeth's youngest brother, Thomas Ayscough. The Ayscoughs were members / freemen of the Carpenters Company, of which Thomas became Master in 1842.

William himself joined the Goldsmiths' in 1784 and the Upholders' in 1809. In 1790 he set up in partnership with his cousin, Thomas Wilkinson at the Wheatsheaf and at the Sun & Plough (9 and 10 Brokers Row). They advertised as "Cabinet and Plate Glass Manufacturers, Appraisers, Auctioneers & Undertakers; General Dealers in all kinds of Household Furniture." His younger brother John-Henry was also involved in a similar business, being registered as a director of a "Wholesale Upholsterer" business at 25 Budge Row in 1794.

William and Thomas were in business together as estate agents, furniture dealers and undertakers at Brokers Row from 1790 to 1807. They specialised in patent furniture, especially extending tables, using for example the "lazy tongs" principle. In 1807, the last year of their partnership, they claimed that their Dining Table occupied when closed a "space considerable smaller than is necessary for the standing of any other Dining Table now in use." They also claimed that their Patent Card Table "is equally remarkable for its ornamental effect, and for the singularity of the principles on which it is made." In 1808, the partnership ended: William set up at 14 Ludgate Hill and Thomas continued at No. 10 Broker's Row. Thomas then renamed his business Thomas Wilkinson & Co., and continued at Broker's Row, eventually occupying numbers 7 to 10. By the early 1820s, Thomas had also established an address at 1 Finsbury Square, continuing in business until 1828.



Ludgate Hill

The reason for this change was that William was able to take over the famous and long-established Ludgate Hill business of Quentin Kay who had died in 1807. No. 14 Ludgate Hill was the main Wilkinson shop until 1855 when the business was transferred to Bond Street. The building at Ludgate Hill was a large shop-house and from its commencement William's business there was of substantial size, the insurance coverage in March 1808 being 2000 pounds. William clearly saw the commercial advantage of promoting patent furniture at his new address, and in 1812 advertised patent bedsteads 'which for their utter utility, firmness and simplicity, surpass everything of the kind ever presented to the

public: they effectually exclude vermin and five minutes.' William had several such with 'portable mahogany chairs, japanned tables and every other article made solid

Wilkinsons was a large and well-established illustrate the usage of the word "upholder" the *Oxford English Dictionary* quotes *The* 1812: "Messrs Wilkinsons, upholders, on been frequently robbed of feathers..." The William Wilkinson who from 1808 was in 14 Ludgate Hill. The thief, according to the one of the porters, who having been captors to the receivers as had been agreed, Thames and jumped off Blackfriars Bridge and was never seen again.



Ludgate Hill 2006

may be fixed and unfixed in beds in his showroom, together chairs and portable dining and warranted for any climate'.

family business. Indeed, to in the sense of "upholsterer", *Annual Register (Chronicle)* of Ludgate-hill, having of late reference is to Joshua's son business on his own account at contemporary newspaper, was caught, instead of leading his threw the feathers into the



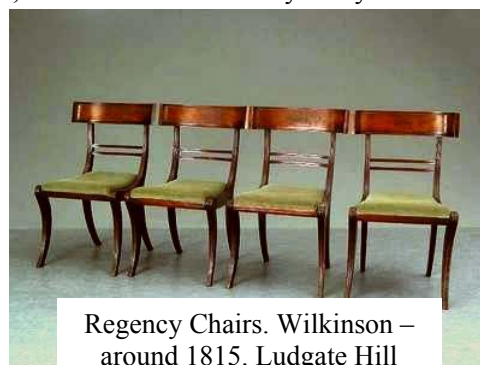
"Whatnot". Wilkinson & sons. Ludgate Hill

In 1812 a fire in the shophouse destroyed part of the Upholders' Company valuables which the Wilkinsons had been storing. In 1824 there was another fire on the premises, but the business was not seriously affected.

In the early to mid 1820s William brought his two Sons William Ayscough Wilkinson and Charles Wilkinson into the business, which then changed its name from “William Wilkinson, cabinet-maker and upholster”, to “William Wilkinson & Sons”. In November 1824 there was another fire at the premises, thought possibly in the part used for manufacturing, although it appeared that the business was soon back on its feet in the same premises.

From the early beginnings in Ludgate Hill in 1808, William adopted a policy of stamping his products, and a wide range of furniture in the Regency style, with the impressed stamp Wilkinson Ludgate Hill, often followed by a number, although initially he used the stamp Wilkinson Late Kaye 14 Ludgate Hill London. Items so stamped include sofa tables, breakfast tables, extending dining tables, sets of tables, bookcases, cabinets, chiffoniers, chests of drawers, dining chairs, sideboards, and music and reading stands. Some patent extending dining tables bear a rectangular brass plate die-stamped with the Royal coat of arms and the words Patent/Wilkinson/14 Ludgate Hill.

William was well known as a versatile designer and craftsman, who worked in a variety of styles producing furniture in the Egyptian, Rococo and Grecian manner. In 1826 the firm signed the prefatory recommendation to P. and M. A. Nicholson’s Practical Cabinet Maker. He also received important commissions including one in 1829 by the architect John Rennie to make a table for the Earl of Lonsdale at Lowther Castle (which is still there). By the end of his career he had developed a flourishing business, his work was prolific, and he was respected among his peers.



Regency Chairs. Wilkinson – around 1815. Ludgate Hill

Sometime after 1814 William Wilkinson acquired a house in Highbury Grove, Islington. He was thought to have been living there in 1833, when on May 29 at the age of seventy, he passed away. Jane died five years later in Stoke Newington in 1738, at the age of sixty-five. Following their father’s death in 1833 William and Charles changed the name of the business to W. & C. Wilkinson.

Like his father, William made a great deal of money as a real estate broker. In his 14-page Will, he stipulated that he be buried in “a plain and correct manner in the family vault at Highgate Chapel.” He left £600 to Jane and £3,000 to each of his 8 children on their attaining the age of twenty-two years. He



“Lazy Tongs” Dining Table  
– Ludgate Hill. Around 1815

bequeathed to his eldest son, William Ayscough, the diamond ring and silver cruet and stand which had belonged to his late father, Joshua. To his daughter Sarah, he bequeathed his father’s silver coffee pot. He left his children his various shares (in the Atlas Insurance Company and in the West Middlesex Water Works), but above all he bequeathed them his many properties mainly scattered all over London, but also in Kingston, Maidstone and Brighton. His brother-in-laws, Thomas Ayscough and Robert Meacock (of Canonbury Square, Islington), and a business associate, William Goodman, were his executors. Jane Wilkinson died in 1838 and was buried in the family vault at Highgate Chapel.

## WILLIAM AYSCOUGH WILKINSON 1796-1853



Georgian Plate Trolley.  
Wilkinson. Ludgate Hill

William Ayscough Wilkinson was the eldest son of William and Jane Wilkinson. He was born in Hackney and, like so many of the Wilkinsons, he was christened at St Leonard's, Shoreditch. One of his younger brothers, Josiah Wilkinson (1804-89), a solicitor, married his first cousin Eliza Meacock in 1826. Four years later, William Ayscough married her sister, Emma Meacock (1812-1886) who was therefore not only his sister-in-law but also his first cousin. She was 18 years old at the time and 16 years younger than he was. Emma and Eliza's mother, Elizabeth, was a younger sister of William Ayscough and Josiah's mother, Jane Ayscough. Elizabeth had married Robert Meacock in the same church in which Jane had married William senior – St Giles, Cripplegate, in June 1793. He was an ironmonger with a business at 3, Redcross-str., Barbican. Later he had a business in Oxford Street. Emma and William Ayscough had 12 children of whom 11 reached adult life. The phenomenon of Wilkinsons marrying siblings recurred in the next generation when William's son George

Ayscough and his nephew Josiah married two sisters (Charlotte Elizabeth Bingley and Florence Bingley). This resulted in some unusual relationships. George Ayscough and Josiah had fathers who were brothers and mothers who were sisters. Thus they were double first cousins. As their mothers were themselves first cousins to their fathers they were also second cousins to one another! The children of George Ayscough and Josiah had even more complex inter-relationships. They were second cousins (doubly) and third cousins! They were also first cousins through their mothers, who were sisters. Fortunately there was no further intermarriage between the later generations, who (according to family legend) were deliberately kept apart during their childhood and adolescent years!

William Ayscough Wilkinson became a freeman of the Upholders' in 1822 (in the same year as his brother Charles, 1800-71). In 1829, William was advertising an upholders business at 17 Cliffords Inn.

## **JAMES MATTHEWS, THEFT: SIMPLE GRAND LARCENY, 15 APR 1830. The Proceedings of the Old Bailey Ref: t18300415-32**

### **TRIAL SUMMARY:**

### **ORIGINAL TEXT:**

700. JAMES MATTHEWS was indicted for stealing, on the 19th of March, 18 brass castors, value 18s.; 6 brass ornaments, value 20s.; 6 pieces of brass, called fork-fastenings, value 15s.; 6 brass handles, value 2s., and 6 brass knobs, value 1s., the goods of William Wilkinson and others, his masters.

MR. WILLIAM AYSCOUGH WILKINSON. I am the son of William Wilkinson, of Ludgate-hill, upholder; I and my brother are his partners - the prisoner was apprenticed to us about three years ago, for seven years. On Friday, the 19th of March, I suspected

him, and when he was going home, about half-past six or seven o'clock. I challenged him with having taken away some brass work, and asked where he had sold the brass work which he took on the Friday before - it was merely by accident I mentioned Friday; I had no particular knowledge of Friday; he appeared at first a little confused - I said, "I desire to know to whom you sold them;" I repeated the question two or three times very rapidly, and he said to Mr. Everard, or some such name, in the New-cut: I then asked where he had sold the brass work on the Tuesday before - he said he did not take any on the Tuesday before; I said, "I mean the Tuesday before that" - he replied, "I sold them in Whitecross-street; "he named the shop, but I do not think he named the person - I then took him up stairs to the warehouse, to a chair which had the castors taken off, and said, "Where did you sell the castors off this chair?" he said, "I sold them to Lambert, (and somebody) in the New-cut" - I then took him to another chair, a sofa, and a set of dining-tables, which had had castors fixed to them; we lost a variety of articles of the description in the indictment, worth more than 4l. or 5l.; he had a private examination before Sir John Perring next day, at Guildhall - I found some castors and brass fork-fastenings at a house in the New-cut, by means of a search-warrant, and brought them away: I fitted them on the legs of a table - they corresponded with the screws, which were left on the table.

Cross-examined by MR. CLARRSON. Q. Did it not strike you that the people who bought them were the worst of the two? A. No, it did not - our foreman, Richardson, was present at the conversation; I certainly said to the prisoner, "I know all about it - tell me where you sold them;" I did not say it was of no use to deny it - I put down what I meant to say to him before I went in; he is an orphan, and was brought to our house by his uncle; who had served us with great propriety.

JOHN CLARK. I am shopman to Messrs. Everet and Lambert, of the New-cut and Charles-street, Long-acre. -The prisoner brought some old brass to sell two or three times; he used to bring about 3lbs. at a time - we allowed 4d. a lb.; it was old brass.

Q. That had been injured by wear? A. Yes, injured by wear, and broken likewise; I did not ask how he came by it, as persons frequently bring in brass. and have articles in exchange - we paid him for this; I do not think I have dealt with him more than three or four times - I never asked what he was, or where he came from - Mr. Wilkinson and an officer went into our foundry, with a search-warrant, and brought out some fork-fastenings and old castors: I told him a lad brought them - he asked if I knew the lad; I said Yes, by his coming to the shop - the brass could not be used till re-melted; I swear that - the castors were broken.

Q. They did not appear as if they had been just taken off good furniture? A. No - some of the table - fork fastenings were correct, two or three of them, but those were not brought altogether.

Q. You observed at the time that they were correct? A. No; when they were put on the desk I went to them, and was surprised to see it; they must be lacquered again before they are fit for use - I have not been in the business more than three months, not with Everet and Lambert -I have been with brass-founders; some of the castors were not broken, they were not fresh - they must be lacquered again.

Cross-examined by MR. CLARKSON. Q. I think I heard you drop that your master keeps a foundry? A. Yes; we melt the brass over again - we do not keep a marine-store shop, but are brass-founders; we do not buy for lacquering, but for melting.

Q. From boys like the prisoner? A. Yes; I do not suppose more than three castors would go to 1 lb. - they were broken: they might be compared with the tables, by the screw holes.

Q. Suppose Mr. Wilkinson was to tell us they were bran new, and of the best character, would that be true?

A. No, they were broken - none of the articles delivered to Mr. Wilkinson were new; they were dirty - I own two or three were new, but they were brought with other old brass; the castors appear to have been worn - they are broken at the screw-hole; it did not strike me that they had been torn from a chair - I thought they had been worn off; they could have new ones for the price it would take to do them up - we sell some new ones at 11d. a set of four, but I do not know what these claw castors are worth; I did not hear Mr. Wilkinson threaten to take me or my masters into custody as receivers.

SAMUEL JEAFFRESON. I am an officer of Union-hall I went with Mr. Wilkinson to Lambert and Co.'s, Newcut, and found some articles which he claimed; I saw Clark - he said he bought them of the prisoner, who was then in custody; I found about 3lbs. - there was a great deal of old brass, which Mr. Wilkinson could not swear to, but Clark said he bought them of the prisoner; Mr. Wilkinson claimed more, but only desired me to bring these away.

Cross-examined. Q. Have you left the best behind? A. No; they are bent, just as if prepared for the forge, but are quite new brass - there is no doubt some are quite new, and not bent at all; nobody could doubt about their being new brass, if he saw it by itself.

MR. WILKINSON. I have no doubt of this being our brass work; we should not send fastenings of this description to be melted as old brass, but these which are bent we should; I dare say we had some bent in our possession, but that is always locked up; these have been taken off furniture in our ware-room - we lost all the fastenings from every table we have in the house; I must say that Everet and Co., as soon as I went there, said there was no need for a search-warrant, I might search every where I liked.



Cross-examined. Q. Were all the castors on your chairs quite new?

A. Some chairs had been made three or four years - they had never been worn, except moving about the warehouse; the brass forks could not be bent, or they would not go into the tables - when these were bent I cannot tell: we lost some castors worth 15s. or 16s. a set, and some at about 2s. 6d. or 2s. - none of them would be worth only 4d. a pound as new, but very few except three or four sets would be of use till new lacquered.

JURY. Q. Must not the prisoner have been many hours taking these castors off the furniture? A. He must have been several; we have a variety of rooms, where he rubbed the furniture - all the castors were taken from a room where we keep furniture which we lend for parties.

Two witnesses gave the prisoner a good character.

GUILTY. Aged 16.

Recommended to Mercy on account of his character.

Judgment Respited.

On the death of his father in 1833, he and Charles took over the Ludgate Hill business. In 1833-34 they made furniture to the designs of Philip Hardwick for the Court Room, Dining Room and Drawing Room of the new Goldsmiths' Hall. The total bill came to £8,471.14s. 7d. Most of the furniture is still in place including the enormous collapsible, banjo-shaped banqueting table (to seat 40) for which Hardwicke specified: "top of best Spanish Mahogany... on firmly framed telescopic frames of wainscot with Mahogany frieze supported by Standards of Spanish Mahogany on large and superior Castors." The price of this table was £322. They made a smaller one for the Court Room. The dining table is still in use for special occasions.

William and Charles Wilkinson's invoice to the Goldsmiths' Company has survived. The billhead reads: "Cabinet & Plate Glass Manufactory, Bo.<sup>s</sup> of Will.<sup>m</sup> & Charl.<sup>s</sup> Wilkinson, Upholders & Interior Decorators, Appraising & House Agency, 14 Ludgate Hill." The "motto" on the "coat of arms" at the top left hand side of the bill reads, "Funerals Performed."

According to one authority (Litchfield, 1894), Wilkinsons was one of the best known London furniture companies of the first half of the century. A later more critical authority (Collard, 1985) states that "the Wilkinsons were not one of the very top firms making the most fashionable furniture, but had a good solid reputation." Their furniture can still be found in the sale rooms today.

When he died at the early age of 57, William Ayscough Wilkinson was living in Paradise House, Paradise Row, Stoke Newington. The cause of death was entered as "Inflammation of the left Lung; a. d. Pleura 4 weeks; Empyema 3 weeks; Hydrothorax of right side; Dropsy of Pericardium." In his Will he stipulated that his funeral "be conducted without ostentation or show and in as pious a manner as consistent with decency - no feathers, velvets or any such nonsense - the whole of the expense not to exceed £50 at most." This comment suggests that the practice of placing a "lid of feathers" (for example black ostrich plumes and velvet) on the coffin which had been common in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was no longer followed in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, even by an undertaker.

William left everything to his wife Emma: his freehold, copyhold and leasehold estates at Ludgate Hill, Cheapside and Grosvenor Street (and all the moneys arising from the upholstery business at Ludgate Hill, which he had inherited from his father, as well as the wines and liquors in the cellars there), and also his shares in railways.

Shortly after the death of her husband, Emma appears to have sold off her share of the core Wilkinson businesses at Ludgate Hill to her brother-in-law, Charles Wilkinson, who carried on the family tradition in a new establishment at 8 Bond Street and 22 Grosvenor Mews (the factory was at Little Charles St, Munster Square).

### **CHARLES WILKINSON 1800 - 1871**

Charles Wilkinson, the second son of William and Jane Wilkinson was born on February 9 1800 at 9 Broker Row, Moorfields.

On February 9 1822 Charles married Henrietta Cowland at St. Mary's, Islington. Henrietta was born about 1802 in Clerkenwell and was therefore twenty at the time of the marriage. They had eight children: Charles 1824, William Ayscough 1825, Jane 1827, Frederick 1828, Augustus 1830, Joseph 1832, Emily 1834, and Henrietta. They were all born at 14 Ludgate Hill, and it can therefore be presumed that certainly until the mid 1 830s the family had its residence at the same place as its business.

After the death of his brother William, the widow sold her share of the furniture business to Charles who then became sole owner of the firm. Shortly after this Charles opened premises at 8 Bond Street, however it is not known whether he continued in the City. His son Frederick joined him in the business and was active in the firm for the rest of his life. Sometime after the mid 1830s Charles purchased his residence Sandfield, Nevill Park, Speldhurst, where he lived until his death from Bright's (kidney) Disease on May 21 1871.

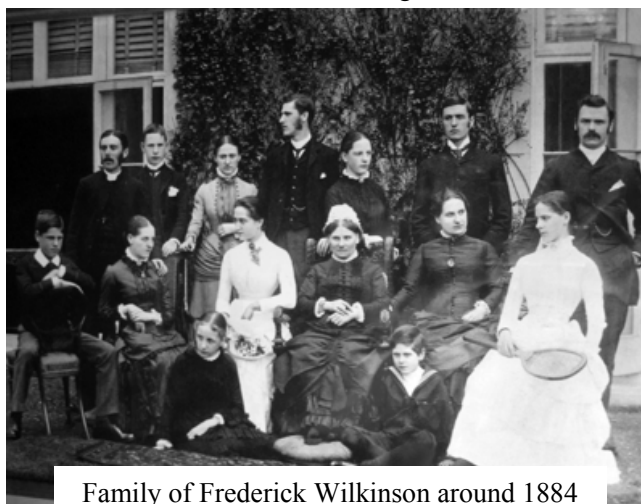
Charles was a gentleman of considerable means having expanded his business to include property. At the time of his death he owned properties in Cherry, Whitney, Coventry, Leadenhall, Elbon, Eawirk, and King Edward's Streets; the Haymarket; The Strand; King's Road, Chelsea; Clapham Park Road and Mile End New Town. Upon his death, these properties, together with other investments and a considerable amount of cash, was divided between his wife Henrietta and the various children.

### **FREDERICK WILKINSON 1828 - 1877**

Frederick Wilkinson, the third son of Charles and Henrietta, was born at 14 Ludgate Hill on October 20 1828. He became a valuer and upholsterer and joined his father Charles in the family business.

On February 22 1853 Frederick Wilkinson married Harriet Ann Townend in Clapham.

They had thirteen children: Annie 1854, Emily 1855, Charles 1856, Helen 1858, Margaret 1860, Frederick 1861, Minnie 1863, William 1864, Herbert 1866, Edith 1867, Alfred 1870, Louisa 1871, and Richard Henry 1874.



Family of Frederick Wilkinson around 1884

For the first few years of their marriage the couple lived at 8 Old Bond Street, where their first three children were born and where the main family business moved in the mid 1850s after his father had purchased William Ayscough's share from his widow. In 1857/8 the family then moved to New Park Road, Clapham, where they lived for about the next four years and their next two children were born. By 1861 they had moved to Llynthill Lodge, Tulse Hill, where they stayed until the late 1860s and where their next five children were born. Frederick then purchased the large family home, Cleveland's in Barnes, where their last three children were born and where they were to live for the remainder of their married life.

It is known that in 1871, after his father's death, the business employed thirty workers. Frederick may not have possessed the same talents as his father and grandfather, as very little of him professionally is known after this date. He is not recorded in directories of fine furniture manufacturers of the period. This may in part have been due to declining health, as on March 26 1877, at his home, Cleveland, he too died of kidney disease, just six years after his father before him. His wife, Harriett, and the unmarried children later moved to Sandfield, Putney Heath Lane, Wandsworth. This of course was also the name of the house in Speldhurst/Tunbridge Wells where Charles Wilkinson had lived up until his death in 1871.

In 1909 the Old Bond Street building was demolished, and the company, re-named Hindley and Wilkinson, relocated to 70/71 Welbeck Street. It is not known whether Frederick's son Charles remained with the business, bringing in Hindley as a partner, or whether it was sold to Hindley who maintained the Wilkinson name for continuity. In any event, the business was eventually absorbed by Marshall & Snellgrove in about 1918. The Wilkinson firm founded by Joshua Wilkinson passed through the hands of four Wilkinson generations over a period of one hundred and fifty years.

This brought the family business to an end!

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The other sons of William and Jane Wilkinson, who survived into adult life, were:

**Josiah Wilkinson**, was born November 19th 1804 in Moorfields and became a solicitor. In 1826 he married his first cousin, twenty-one year-old Eliza Meacock. They had five sons, three of whom became solicitors and one an artist. One of his sons, Josiah (also a solicitor) married Florence Emma Bingley, the sister of Charlotte Elizabeth Bingley who married George Ayscough Wilkinson. This son (Josiah) is credited with preparing the family tree in 1879, which covered four generations of Wilkinsons starting with his grandfather, William Wilkinson. Josiah senior died in 1889, aged 85 and Josiah junior died in 1923 at the age of 77.

**Alfred Wilkinson** was born December 29 1810 in Ludgate Hill, went to Mill Hill school and from there was the first Wilkinson to go Cambridge. He was at Jesus College, and was 34th (lowest) Wrangler (first class honours graduate in mathematics tripos) in 1833. Upon graduating Alfred became a parish priest. He first became a curate in Teddington, and later, in the 1860s, was appointed to a position in Kingsdon, Somerset. In 1837 he married twenty-one year-old Caroline Arabella Blunt. They had ten children. He died in 1868.



**Peter Richard Wilkinson**, was born on May 1814 in Ludgate Hill. He moved to Brighton where he became an Auctioneer and Estate Agent. He married Elizabeth Hodgkinson and had ten children.

Sons of William Ayscough and Emma, who survived to adult life:

#### **George Ayscough Wilkinson 1837-1906**

George Ayscough Wilkinson was William Ayscough Wilkinson and Emma's 5<sup>th</sup> child and eldest son. His father had died when he was a teenager and his mother had sold her interest in the furniture business to his uncle. Therefore, unlike his father, grandfather and great grandfather, he did not join the Upholders' Company. Instead he pursued another of the Wilkinsons' traditional business activities, being an auctioneer and surveyor (what we would today call an estate agent). His offices were variously at 7 Poultry Lane, at 37 Bucklerbury EC, and at 4a Frederick's Place, Old Jewery. He was in partnership with his sons. The firm undertook a number of important property auctions in the City of London, the catalogues of which are preserved in the Guildhall Library. The firm survived until 1934 when it passed into the hands of Daniel Watney & Sons. In 1945 it became Daniel Watney, Eilcart, Inman and Nunn, Architects and Surveyors. It finally went out of business in 1980.

In 1862 George Ayscough married Charlotte Elizabeth Bingley (1841-) of Knab Cottages, Ecclesall near Sheffield, Yorkshire. She was the daughter of a Sheffield solicitor, Charles William Bingley. They had 8

children of whom 6 survived. Their home was at Monkenholt, Hadley Green Road, High Barnet. The house is still there. Next door is Livingstone Cottage, which was the residence in 1857-8, of Dr. David Livingstone, who wrote "Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa" there.

George Ayscough Wilkinson died in 1906 at the age of 59 of influenza followed by pneumonia. He left no will. Some of his monogrammed silver tableware (D. & J. Welby, 1894) has survived.

### **Arthur Wilkinson 1839 – 1872**

Arthur Wilkinson died aged 33. He was unmarried and, in 1871, was living at home with the family. Nothing else is known about him.

### **Herbert Wilkinson 1847 – 1914**

Herbert Wilkinson is listed in the 1891 census as a manufacturer and in the 1901 census as an auctioneer's clerk. He married Mary Rose Gliddon, but it is not known whether they had any children (there were none listed in the 1891 or 1901 census). In 1891 they were living in St Marylebone in London; In 1901 in North Sheen.

### **Harry Collard Wilkinson 1851 – 1891**



Harry Collard Wilkinson was the youngest son and the last of 12 children of William Ayscough Wilkinson and Emma. He was born at the family home at Stoke Newington and, after his father's premature death, was educated at Clifton College (soon after its foundation) and later at Tonbridge School, before entering Lichfield Theological College and joining the Anglican Church as a minister. He considered joining a monastic mission in southern Africa, but decided against and returned to England and a Curateship in Torquay, where he met his future wife Elizabeth Ellen Douglas (1864-1937), the daughter of James Douglas and his wife Emily Ann (nee Harris). James Douglas was the first tobacconist in Torquay. They were married in 1884 and subsequently moved to Cheshire, where Harry was chaplain to the Cornwall-Legh family at High Legh, near Knutsford. They had three sons before Harry Collard died of appendicitis in October 1891, just two weeks short of his fortieth birthday.

Notes on the authors:

*This document was compiled by James Wilkinson from data provided by David Allison, Hugh Wilkinson, Endymion Wilkinson and Michael Wilkinson.*

*The early Wilkinson data was researched extensively by Michael Wilkinson and David Allison, with additional data provided by Endymion Wilkinson. Michael Wilkinson provided information about the Brind family connection and also found records of marriage, baptisms and deaths from St Leonard's, Shoreditch. He has also gathered data about the Ayscough family over several generations.*

*Two documents formed the main basis for this history – "History of the Wilkinsons" (David Allison, 2004) and "My Wilkinsons" (Endymion Wilkinson, 2004).*

**David Forbes Allison** (b 1943) is the son of Marion Forbes Wilkinson (b 1913). His maternal grandfather was Richard Henry Wilkinson (1874 – 1941), who was a son of Frederick Wilkinson (1828 – 1877), and grandson of Charles Wilkinson, of the furniture making dynasty. He is a retired company director, living in Toronto.

(William) **Hugh Wilkinson** (b 1942) is the son of Reginald Wilkinson (1900 – 1962) and grandson of William Thomas Wilkinson (1864 – 1952) who was also a son of Frederick Wilkinson (1828 – 1877). Hugh is a second cousin to David Allison. He is a retired stockbroker and also lives in Toronto. His brother Anthony Wilkinson (Tony – below) is a retired



Hugh, David & Jim in  
Toronto Sep 2004  
(testing an Aussie Shiraz)

accountant living in Bath.

**Dr Endymion Porter Wilkinson** (b 1941) is descended from William Ayscough Wilkinson (elder brother of the above mentioned Charles Wilkinson), being a great grandson of George Ayscough Wilkinson. He is a fourth cousin to David Allison and (William) Hugh Wilkinson. He was EU Ambassador to China (1994 to 2001) and is a senior fellow at the Asia Center, Harvard University where he lectures on East Asian Languages and Civilizations.

(John) **Michael Wilkinson** (b 1938) is descended from Rev. Alfred Wilkinson (another brother of Charles Wilkinson) and is a fourth cousin to David Allison, (William) Hugh Wilkinson and Endymion Wilkinson. He is a retired University Academic (Biochemistry) and lives in London.

**Prof James Leonard Wilkinson** (Jim - b 1943) is a great grandson of William Ayscough Wilkinson and grandson of Harry Collard Wilkinson. He is a second cousin once removed to Endymion Wilkinson and 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin once removed to David Allison, (William) Hugh Wilkinson, Anthony Wilkinson and to (John) Michael Wilkinson. He is a doctor working as a Paediatric Cardiologist in Melbourne.



Trish and Tony Wilkinson  
(brother of Hugh)  
August 2005



Caroline and Michael Wilkinson  
with "Wilkinson Table" Aug 2005