

Lilian Constance Watts 1906-86 and Rene Cassie Watts 1906-2000

Connie and Rene Watts were born on 11 October 1906 in Kent and spent most of their lives in Harpenden. Their parents, **Sidney Robert Denley Watts** 1876-1949 and **Dorothy Leonie Fox** 1876-1962, married in Lambeth in 1903.

They had 3 children: the twins and a son, Leslie, who died as an infant in 1904.



In 1911 the Watts family were living at Jesmond, Coleswood Road, Harpenden. By 1939 the twins and their parents had moved a few roads nearer to the centre of Harpenden. Their new address was 92 Cravells Road. Rene was a dentist's receptionist, and many Harpenden

| | | | | | |
|------------------|---|---------|----|---|--------------------------------|
| Watts, Sidney R | m | Oct 27 | 76 | m | ARP officer. |
| Watts, Dorothy L | f | June 17 | 76 | m | unpaid domestic |
| Watts, Rene C | f | Oct 11 | 06 | S | dentist's receptionist. |
| Watts, Lilian C | f | Oct 11 | 06 | S | order clerk, tie manufacturer. |

residents remember her in that role. Connie was an order clerk working for a tie manufacturer.

Rene, having outlived her twin sister and any local relatives, deposited her family photos with the local history society early in the 21st century. Recent research, including locating distant family connections, has assembled the following information about the family.

Some of the photos are included such as the twins, their parents and their grandparents.

James Denley Watts 1851-1937 'was a leather goods maker, rising from poverty to being very wealthy and a Freeman of the City of London. He eventually bought a company called Drew and Sons and the family had a shop on Piccadilly, London until the mid 1950s'.



<https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/people/cp3530/drew-and-sons>

This is confirmed in his will:

WATTS James Denley of 117 Grand-avenue **Worthing** died 10 November 1937 Probate **London** 16 December to Albert James Denley Watts leather goods manufacturer and Arthur Stanley Craven income tax specialist. Effects £6951 1s. 1d.

At some stage the family may have lived at Woodford Lodge:



Woodford Lodge.

James married Mary Jane Lye Farrant 1853-1908 in London in 1874 and their children were:

1. Albert James Denley Watts 1875-1957 (married 1901, no children)
2. **Sidney Robert Denley Watts 1876 -1949 (married 1903, twin girls born 1906)**
3. Alfred Henry 'Harry' Denley Watts 1879-57 (married 1910, boy born 1910)
4. Lillian Amy Denley Watts 1880-1964 (m Craven 1908, girl & boy born 1908 & 1913)
5. William Thomas Denley Watts 1888-1957 (married 1913, girl born 1914)



James is shown on the back left of the family group and his wife in the middle of the front row. That dates the picture to before 1908 when she died.

Their only daughter, Lillian, is on the left. The man and woman on the right hand ends of the rows are likely to be the eldest son and his wife. The twins' father is probably next to his father.

The family tree is shown below:

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--------------------------------------|---|---|--|--|--|
| | | | James Denley WATTS 1851-1937 | m1 | Mary Jane Lye FARRANT 1853-1908 | m2 | Sarah Jane WALKER née CAMPBELL | | |
| | | | ┌───────────┴───────────┐ | | | | | | |
| | Albert James Denley WATTS 1875-1957 | Sidney Robert Denley WATTS 1876-1949 | Alfred Henry 'Harry' Denley WATTS 1878-1957 | | Lillian Amy Denley WATTS 1880-1964 | | William Thomas Denley WATTS 1888-1957 | | |
| | | m Dorothy 'Dolly' Leonie FOX | m Editha Jane SMITH | | m Arthur Stanley CRAVEN | | m Elweth Muriel NEWMAN | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | Leslie WATTS 1904-04 | Lillian Constance 'Connie' WATTS 1906-1985 | Rene Cassie WATTS 1906-2000 | Sidney Alfred WATTS 1910-57 | Kathleen Mary Augusta CRAVEN 1908-92 | Stanley James CRAVEN 1913-2002 | Muriel Joan WATTS 1914-2004 | | |

In the twins' generation several of their cousins are younger than them by 4, 7 and 8 years and this is apparent in several childhood photos.

However, their cousin Kathleen, daughter of their aunt Lillian, was of a similar age and probably appears in several pictures with them.

So far nobody has been able to differentiate between the twins in any pictures.



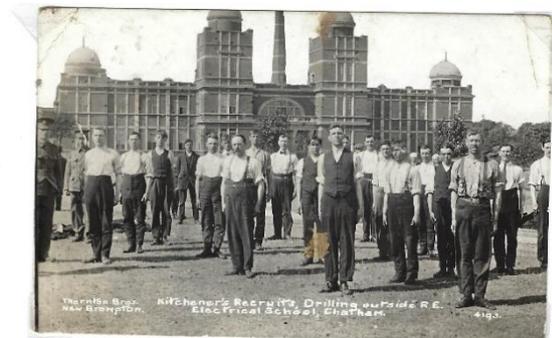
The twins and visitors at Coleswood Road, presumably Kathleen and her mother.



The only picture of the twins with a younger boy it said to be Sydney. But this picture is of the twins and a cousin, not their brother, and is assumed to be Sidney Alfred Watts 1910-57 son of the twin's uncle Alfred Henry 'Harry' Denley Watts 1878-1957 and his wife Editha Jane nee Smith 1879-1939. They lived in Wood Green, the location mentioned on the photograph.

Bonnie & Renée aged 6 yrs and Brother Sydney, 2 1/2 Feb. 1913.

'Harry' may have visited again as he sent this post card to the twin's dad in 1914.



Albert Lacy, the soldier who sent this postcard to Mr. Watts, with regards to Elsa, Bonnie and Renée, must have been very fortunate in his allotted 'billet.'

Postcard sent on Dec. 22nd 1914 to Mr. S. J. Watts of 'Jesmond', Coleswood Road by 'Harry' who hoped to visit the family at Christmas.



Other WW1 information is included in the album. It may all have come from Albert Lacy who was billeted with the Watts family in WW1.

He writes from to Mrs. Humphrey, 2 Chiltern Road Dunstable, Bedfordshire. "We are all very comfortable here; bedrooms with feather beds and meals with the family." "Hardly any work!"



*The twins with?
some years later. c.1917?*

The twins' youngest cousin was Muriel Joan Denley Watts 1914-2004 the daughter of the twins' uncle William Thomas Denley Watts 1887-1957 and Elweth Muriel née Newman.

A much later picture of Muriel is in the album with her husband James Walter J Crouch as confirmed by a descendant in California.



Only this picture of children/cousins is not authenticated.

The bigger girls have the same dresses but are they the same age? Are any of them the twins?

Pictures of older people:

The caption of Italy 1919 suggests that this could be the three cousins with similar ages (twins and Kathleen Craven?).



The 3 pictures of individual older ladies in album:

The first one has been identified as Lilian Amy Denley Watts.



The remaining pictures could be of Connie and Rene or just of one of them. So far, no research has attributed any picture to a named twin.



Are the twins on either side of this wedding group wearing similar outfits?



Various other pictures in the album are still not confirmed as connected to the family. Perhaps they are pictures of friends of the twins and maybe connected with Harpenden?

September 2021