

GENEALOGY REPORTS ON TWO JOHNSON FAMILIES WITH ROOTS IN GRIFFYDAM

Due to the proliferation of Johnson's in Griffydam in the 19th and 20th centuries the following has been recorded to establish some basic facts on two separate local Johnson families in order to try and assist fellow genealogists with their research. The author would welcome any further information relating to the Johnsons referred to in this study. Photographs have been added where available

FIRST DRAFT

ONGOING PROJECT

BY SAMUEL T STEWART - AUGUST 2025

FAMILY NUMBER 1

SIDNEY JOHNSON AND HIS WIFE SARAH HARRIET (NEE., KNIGHT) AND THEIR FAMILY

Sidney Johnson, a coal miner (b.1869) married Sarah Harriet Knight (b.1870) on 4 January 1890, in Ashby de la Zouch. When Sarah Harriet Knight was born on 31 May 1870, in Kegworth, Leics, her father, John William Knight, was 27 and her mother, Sarah Hannah Nicklinson, was 24. Sidney and Sarah became the parents of 9 children as listed below. When their son Sidney Johnson junior was born on the 3rd of September 1895 the family were living on **Vinegar Hill, also known as Brand Hill. See central area of map below.**

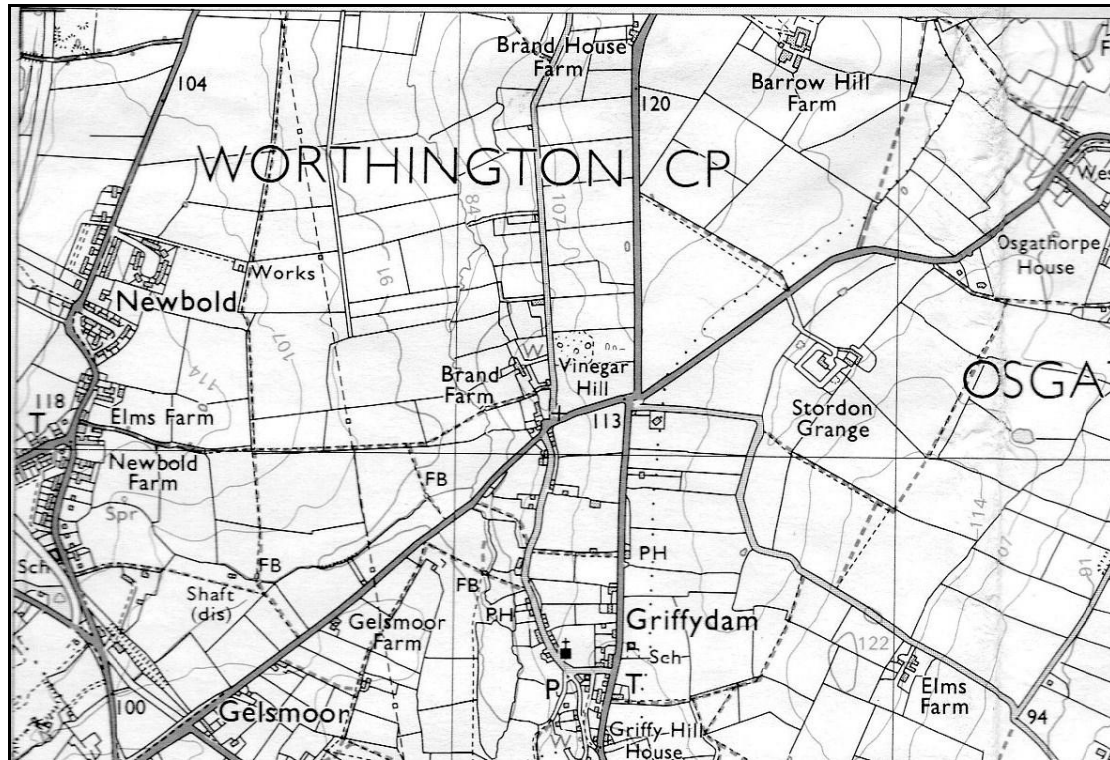
The 1911 census has them living at Brand Hill (Vinegar Hill) still, which suggests they had all their children in that location.

Sometime prior to 1921 they had moved to live at 'Forest View' Top Road, Griffydam, which was next to No.31., where James and Percy Hall lived. In 1921, Sidney senior is recorded as an out of work coal miner hewer at Snibston Colliery. They had three of their children living with them - Mary Hilda (b.1899), an out of work hosiery worker; Frederick (b.1905), a farm labourer and carter at H. Martin, Brand Farm, Griffydam and Wilfred Thomas (b.1897), was still living with them, and was an out of work coal miner hewer at Snibston Colliery. The 1939 register confirmed Sidney Senior and Sarah were living at 'Forest View' on their own.

Sidney died on 1 September 1946, in Leicestershire at the age of 77, and was buried in Griffydam, Wesleyan Methodist Graveyard together with his wife Sarah Harriet who died in on Oct 3rd 1951 aged 81, and their daughter Margaret Addie Johnson (b. 1903 d.1928) was also buried with them in the grave shown below.



Their son John Sidney Johnson is also commemorated on the gravestone which states - 'P.T.E. JOHN SIDNEY JOHNSON, LEICESTER REGIMENT, MISSING 22nd MARCH 1918 AGED 22. **Read more about John Sidney Johnson (known as Sidney) on page 4.** The author has written a separate publication about Private 14681 Sidney Johnson which is free to download and read on his website samuelstewart.com which can be found under the 'Wartime - Lest we Forget' subsection.



I have been asked several times if I knew how Vinegar Hill got its name. My own interpretation is as follows, although others may disagree of course. For example, many places in the UK and USA are named after famous battles and Vinegar Hill is a good example. I was surprised to find a number of places with this name in America.

The **Battle of Vinegar Hill** (Irish: *Cath Chnoc Fhíodh na gCaor*) was a military engagement during the Irish Rebellion of 1798 on 21 June 1798 between a force of approximately 13,000 government troops under the command of Gerard Lake and 16,000 United Irishmen rebels led by Anthony Perry. The battle, a major rebel defeat, took place on 21 June 1798 on a large rebel camp on Vinegar Hill and in the streets of Enniscorthy, County Wexford and marked the last major attempt by the rebels to hold and control territory taken in Wexford.

**CHILDREN OF SIDNEY JOHNSON AND HIS WIFE
SARAH HARRIET - ALL THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN BORN AT
VINEGAR HILL**

[Constance Ellen Johnson b. Vinegar Hill, Griffydam](#)

1890–

[Ethel Harriet Johnson b. Vinegar Hill, Griffydam](#)

1892–

Benjamin Harry Johnson b. Vinegar Hill, Griffydham

b. 8th Nov 1893 -

The 1939 register records that Benjamin H Johnson is living on the 'Tentus' with his wife May (b. 8 Nov 1898) and a son Wilfred H (b.17 June 1897) a colliery coal Hower U/G. There is also Rowland Hill (b.13 Oct 1921) described as a son, (must be g/son)

(John) **Sidney Johnson junior b. Vinegar Hill, Griffydham**

1895–1918



The above photograph was thought to have been taken when the family were still living on Vinegar Hill following his enlistment at Ashby de la Zouch in 1914 with the 6th (service) Battalion of the Leicestershire regiment which was raised at Leicester in 1914 as part of Kitchener's first New Army (K1). Sidney was sadly killed in action on the eastern edge of Epinette Wood, during the battle of Cambrai 23 March 1918, aged 22.

Commemoration – Pozieres Memorial, Somme, France.

MORE ABOUT SIDNEY JOHNSON JUNIOR b.1895

As can be seen from the above, Sidney Johnson junior (b.1895) had nine siblings.

The 1911 census records that Sidney junior's occupation was a "Carter at the Lime Works" (presumably Cloud Hill).

Sidney Johnson junior enlisted in Ashby de la Zouch on the 5th of September 1914 at the young age of 19 when his occupation as a "Quarryman" was recorded, and he was medically classified as A1. His service records confirm him as a machine gunner but at the time of his death, he was a Lewis Gunner.

He enlisted with the 6th (service) Battalion of the Leicestershire regiment which was raised at Leicester in 1914 as part of Kitchener's first New Army (K1). They joined the 110th Brigade, 37th Division. Following training at Borden in Hampshire they proceeded to France on the 29th July 1915 to join the "British Expeditionary Force" where shortly after, they transferred with the 110th brigade to the 21st Division.

Wilfred Thomas Johnson b. Vinegar Hill, Griffydham

1897–

Wilfred enlisted in 1916, but, being in a reserved occupation as a coal miner, he was not called up till 1918. He then served in France with the Grenadier Guards.

[Mary Hilda Johnson b. Vinegar Hill, Griffydam](#)

1899–1956

[Joseph Owen Johnson b. Vinegar Hill, Griffydam](#)

1900–1983

[Margaret Addie Johnson b. Vinegar Hill, Griffydam](#)

1903–1928

[Frederick Johnson b. Vinegar Hill, Griffydam](#)

b. 15th May 1905

In the 1939 register, Frederick Johnson (b.15th May 1905), is now recorded as living at 'Ashgrove' on the Top Road, Griffydam, with his wife Gertrude (b. 13th May 1901) and is described as 'All round experienced - Farm'. This was apparently the property where Jack Harris later had his shop, next to 'Forest View' where his mother and father were living.

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FAMILY NUMBER 2

BENJAMIN JOHNSON AND HIS WIFE MARY AMELIA (NEE., HODGES) AND THEIR FAMILY

When Benjamin Johnson was born in 1845, in Lount, Leicestershire, England, United Kingdom, his father, Joseph Johnson, was 35 and his mother, Sarah Watson, was 38. He married Mary Amelia Hodges in 1867, in Leicestershire. Mary Amelia was born in 1841 in Griffydam. They were the parents of at least 6 sons and 1 daughter.

The 1871 census confirms that Benjamin (27), a coal miner who was born in Lount, and his wife Mary Amelia (29) were living in Griffydam and they had three children, all born in Griffydam - Joseph (3), Sidney (2) and Herbert (3months).

In the 1881 census, Joseph is not recorded, but as he appears later, it is assumed he was perhaps living with relatives.. They have four further children - John (7), Benjamin (5), Amelia (3) and Thomas (1).

In 1891, Benjamin (now 45) and Mary Amelia (now 49) have no further children and living with them are Joseph (24, coal miner), Herbert (20, coal miner), John (17, coal miner), Amelia (13, scholar) and Thomas (11, Scholar).

In the 1901 census Benjamin (56) and Mary Amelia (58) have two of their children still living with them - Amelia (23), unmarried and a general domestic servant (presumably at home) and Thomas (21), unmarried, and employed as a coal miner.

Benjamin died on 29 December 1923, at the age of 78, his death being registered at Ashby de la Zouch. He was buried in Griffydam Wesleyan Methodist Chapel graveyard.

CHILDREN OF BENJAMIN JOHNSON AND HIS WIFE MARY AMELIA WHO WERE ALL BORN IN GRIFFYDAM

William Joseph Johnson b. Griffydam

1868 -

Sidney Johnson b. Griffydam

1869–1946

When Sidney Johnson was born on 6 January 1869, in Griffydam, his father, Benjamin Johnson, was 24 and his mother, Mary Amelia Hodges, was 28.

Herbert Johnson b. Griffydam

1871 -

By the 1901 census, Herbert (30), and a coal miner was married to Helena (29) who was born in Peggs Green. They are living in Griffydam and have two children - Lucy (5) b. in Griffydam and Herbert (3), born in Griffydam also.

John Johnson b.Griffydham

b. 12th Oct 1873

In the 1939 register, John Johnson, b. 12th Oct 1873 a retired U/G colliery deputy is recorded as being married to Catherine Mary Johnson (nee., Crabtree b.28th May 1873) and they are living at 'Sun Hill', Top Road, Griffydham (No.25 ?). They have two unmarried daughters living with them Florence (Florrie) J. Johnson b. 10th December 1906, a teacher (4A) Elementary and her sister Eva (b. 5th February 1908) who is a railway clerk.

There first daughter Annie was born in 1895 and died at the young age of 4 and a half. The photograph of her gravestone in Griffydham Methodist chapel graveyard is shown on the next page.

Mother and father, John and Catherine were buried in Griffydham Wesleyan Methodist Graveyard. Their gravestone is shown below.





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**Photograph taken at the opening of the new Sunday School building in 1932
on the LH side of the Chapel.**

This was built by Ramsdens' of Castle Donnington

Left to Right :-

- Walter Davies - Local Preacher and Sunday School Superintendent
- Frank Rowell
- Herbert Rowell - Local Preacher and Trustee (grandfather of Herbert Eric Rowell).
- **John Johnson - Local Preacher and always first up to speak at the "Love Feast"**
- Leonard Wesley Rowell (Steward for 40 years) with his son Herbert Eric Rowell

Continued over page

**ABOUT JOHN JOHNSON AND HIS WIFE CATHERINE'S DAUGHTER
MISS FLORANCE JOHNSON**

TEACHER AT GRIFFYDAM INFANT SCHOOL IN 1940



Front Row, Left to Right

Gerald Hall, Derek Darby, Colin Hodges, Brian Hubbard, Les Rowell, Kenneth Hill, Kay Bird, William Wilton, Keith Richards, ? McCewan

2nd Row Left to Right

Clifford Whyman, ?? , ? Hall, Betty Horne, ?? , ?? , ?? , Marjorie Collins, John Collins

3rd Row, Left to Right

Miss Florrie Johnson (Teacher), ? **Smith (Evacuee)**, Stan Hodges, Pauline Hill, ?? , Brenda Leedham (Twin), Mureen Leedham (Twin), Betty Johnson, Marilyn Leeson, Stella Hodges, Harold Burton, Jackie Toone

Top Row Left to Right

Barbara Bradley, Nancy Bradford, June Pickering, Marlene Hodges, Joyce Marshall, Mirabelle King, ? , ? , Gwenda Bird, Rosemary Benson, Joyce Collins, **Miss Merishaw (Head Mistress)**

Photograph taken during 2nd W.W. - Note the Evacuee on the 3rd row

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**FLORENCE JOHNSON WITH HER CLASS AT
GRIFFYDAM INFANT SCHOOL 1949**

Front - Left to Right

June Harrison, Coral Robinson, Marion Hodges, Patricia Holland, Marinda Johnson, ??, ??

Middle

Malcolm Pole, Clifford Marriott, Jennifer Worthington, Glenis Smith, Kenny Moore, Mavis Kilby, Marie Cook, Don Hubbard, Reggie Burton.

Top

Miss Florrie Johnson (Teacher), ??, Michael Chadwick, William Johnson, Lionel Westley, ??, ??, [Trevor Stewart \(author of this publication\)](#)

Miss Johnson taught at Griffydam senior and infant schools for a period of about 42 years including a period at the senior school as a student teacher from 1921.

**MISS JOHNSON'S RETIREMENT CELEBRATION AT THE AGE OF 65 IN 1971
FOLLOWING 42 YEARS TEACHING AT THE SCHOOLS IN GRIFFYDAM.**



From L to R:-

**Miss J. Townsend, Miss Florrie Johnson, Mr S. Towers, Mr Ken. Hutchinson,
Jane Elson (School captain)**

Benjamin Johnson b. Griffydam

1876–1890



Benjamin Johnson's grave in Griffydam Wesleyan Methodist Chapel Graveyard

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[Amelia Johnson b. Griffydam](#)

1878–1963

[Thomas Johnson b. Griffydam](#)

1881–1934



IN LOVING MEMORY OF
THOMAS JOHNSON
DIED 12th JAN 1934 AGED 53 YEARS
"REST AFTER WEARINESS"
ALSO HIS DEAR WIFE
SARAH ANN JOHNSON
DIED 15th AUG 1972 AGED 96 ? YEARS
RE- UNITED