

## The Myth of the Family Curse

Parts of family history are the anecdotal legends and myths that have been passed down. Many of these are often of a romantic nature but this one is less so. Although we may give no credence to curses, they can have a psychological effect on those who are never sure, as well as delight those that enjoying the fun of handing down the story.

This story goes back 200 years and originates with the ancestor Agostino Aglio mentioned in Volume 1.

He was born in Cremona, a town that recognises him as a painter of the town, and at an early age moved with his family to Milan. His future was mapped out with the promise by the Holy Roman Emperor of the time, of a University place. However at about the age of 20 he joined Napoleon fighting for the creation of a Republic in Italy and after battles and illness went to Rome to study painting with a professional Campovecchio.

There is no doubt that in Rome he was rubbing shoulders with the higher escalons meeting artists such as Angelica Kaufman and Canova and encountering Cardinals and the like from the Church.

The story goes that he had a row with a Cardinal, (this is quite understandable for someone who had fought for a Republic), and as a result the Cardinal applied a curse that the eldest son throughout each generation of his family would die tragically, until he or his family returned to mother church.

By my childhood, the myth had been well established by the number of deaths that fitted the pattern however the full extent of the story was not appreciated.

Not relevant but sad, is the fact that Aglio's 3 siblings all died of Small Pox.

After Aglio came to England, he married Letitia Clarke in 1808 in an Anglican Church, St Annes Soho. Obviously his Italian Catholic Faith was not that strong as to ensure that he did not break the very strict rules of the time.

Agostino's eldest official son, Augustine Aglio, was baptised, Ludovico Cajetanus Augustinus Aglio 2 days after he was born at "Hammersmith RC" and then as Augustine Louis Cajetanus again 5 years later at St James Anglican Church, Piccadilly. At the first baptism Agostino called himself Augustinus Maria Aglio.

The boy survived, but he did have born to him a son 3 days earlier, Peter Augustine Aglio, to a lady called Jane Tomlinson. As to what happened to him there is not information, but in effect Aglio lost his eldest son.

Augustine Aglio has 4 children, a boy and three girls and the boy died within a year.

One of these girls, Marian, married William Joseph Dibdin and had a total of 10 children, one girl dying at birth. Her eldest son was Lionel Dibdin who died tragically with his wife, Cecily, in an airplane crash in 1933. Their first son, died sadly at the age of six of pneumonia in 1917 while Lionel was at the Front in WW1 and his second son, Peter died in a tragic military accident in 1943 during WW2.

I think that it is unlikely that some of the early death's will have been known in detail particularly as some of the information has come from Ancestry records but the myth lingered on into the 1950s with the help of Bobby Montford, the daughter of Marian Dibdin, who was the story teller of the family. Bearing in mind that she and her family arrived back in England from Australia in 1938, it is a wonder that she had so much insight but it must have been gleaned from her mother.

Joan Dibdin as she entered adulthood in the 1940s may well have heard many of these stories and we can wonder what the tale of the curse had on her by the end of World War 2, by which time all those that she loved had died tragically, except her newborn son who because she had married a Roman Catholic, Tony Guise, was going to be brought into the Church with the best Catholic education she could muster so as to fulfil the wishes of her dead husband.

I repeat the quote from a letter to Neil Callow in 1944

"They are all accidents, Neil, my parents, Peter and now Tony ..and I cannot help wondering sometimes if there is some curse upon me or through me on those who are dear to me, and I dread and fear for Raoul. He is my last tie to this earth now, and if anything should happen to him."

What a load she bore.

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