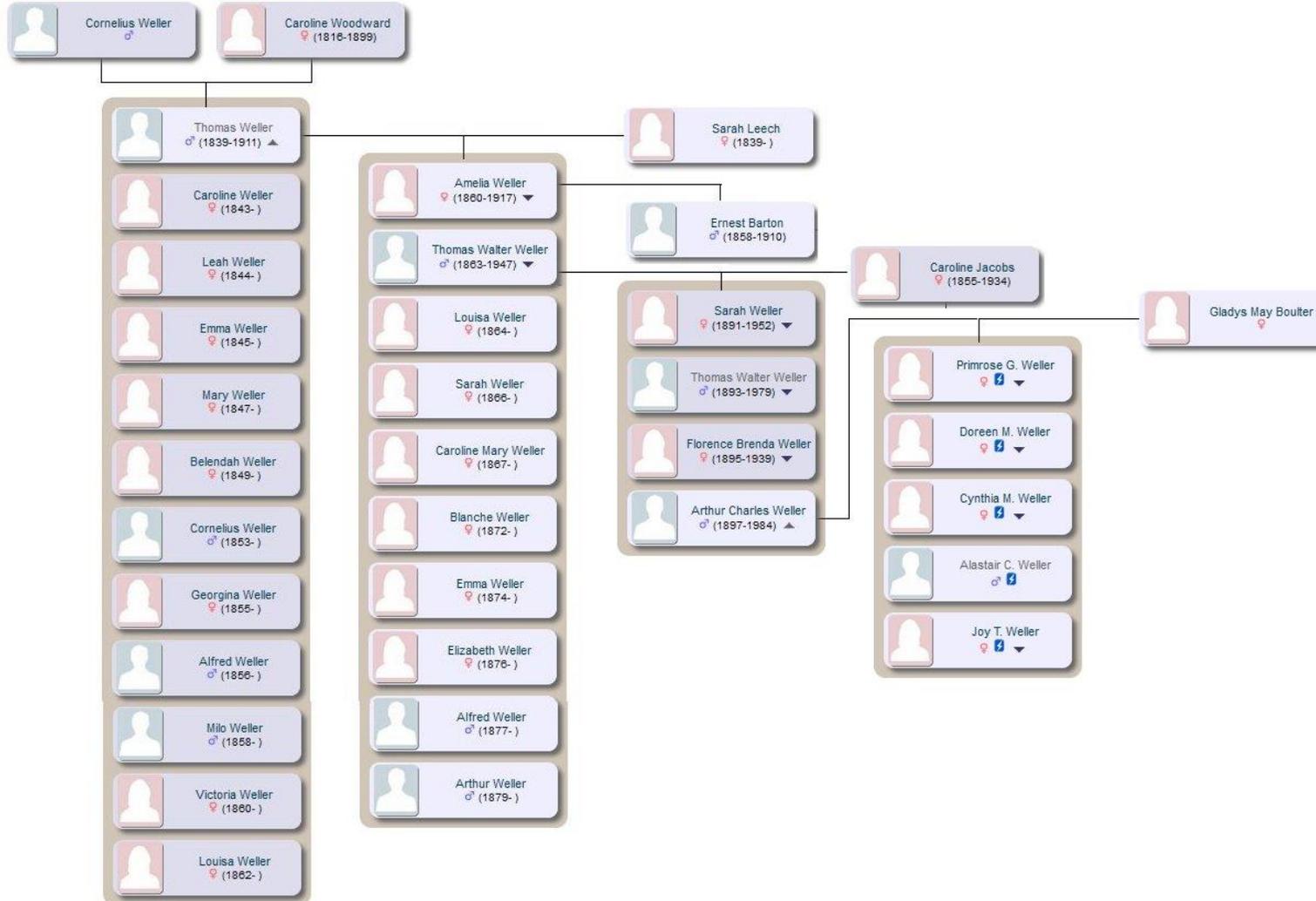


Weller

The Weller family tree is a compact one as below. The family took over the Cullum business, as detailed later.



On the way down the hill I called in at Cullums, the wheel-wright's shop, now acquired by Mr Weller, and here I met Mr Holifield, the last of the Wheatley wheelwrights.¹

'When I left school,' he said, 'I was apprenticed at a shilling a week, and after six years I was given eighteen shillings a week. I married on twenty-five shillings a week.'

'In early days I was mainly making farm wagons and carts. It used to cost about thirty-two pounds ten shillings to make a wagon and took about six months and we were lucky if we made a profit of ten shillings on each wagon. In the winter we made the wheels with the body standing in the shop. That industry practically died out in 1919. There has been no wagon-making for years. I've made butcher's carts, baker's carts, gentlemen's gigs, all sorts. Tying the wheels was the most difficult job. Bending the solid iron tyres, which were sometimes four inches across, and firing them correctly took quite a bit of doing what with allowing for expansion and all that.'

'Do you know that in the Oxfordshire wagon there was never a straight square piece of wood? They were always curved slightly. The Oxfordshire wagon framework was in two separate sections.'

'I once made a model wagonette, to the scale of one third the ordinary size, and now it is being used in a gentleman's garden for gathering leaves.'

'And what do you do now that there are no more wooden wheels and wagons to make?' I asked.

'I work on the bench. Lately I've done a kissing-gate for a private house, a lych-gate for a churchyard, and before you go I must show you a bookcase I've made for our own house.'

Mr Holifield's house faces the carpenter's yard.² Two of his grandchildren were very angry with me for interrupting their television programme in order that I should see the beautifully made oak bookcase of their grandfather. I wondered if either of them would ever read the books in the case. I felt pretty certain that they would never be as good craftsmen as their grandfather.

¹ 'Wheatley the Village without a Green', written by P B Mais and published in 1956. The chapter is found in record 2234, with the interview that year or the year previous.

² It is in Bell Lane.