

Charles Leeson, 9804, *Hougoumont*

Researched by Marcia Watson

Aliases: Gleeson, Smith, Powell, Kelly

Born	14 June 1830
Baptism	1 August 1830, St Chad, Cheetham, Manchester, Lancashire (Catholic Church)
Parents	Michael Gleeson and Mary Smith
Parent's marriage	20 March 1826, Manchester, Lancashire
Siblings	Mary (1835), George (1839), Henry (1845), Michael (1849)
Wife	Margaret Kelly
Marriage	16 September 1853, St Peters, Liverpool
Children	Charles (1854), William (1857), Henry (1865)

The above birth and baptism are believed to be that of convict Charles Leeson. Although his baptism record shows the surname as Leeson, the family name appears to be Gleeson. Charles said his father, Michael Leeson, was a plasterer. The marriage register of Michael Gleeson records that he was a plasterer, and the birth certificate of his son Michael confirms the father was a plasterer.

The first criminal records for Charles Gleeson are two summary convictions in 1849. On 9 May 1849, he was convicted of being a suspicious person and sentenced to one calendar month. Then, on 29 June 1849, he was sentenced to three days for being drunk. On 23 July 1849, the following month, at Liverpool Borough Sessions, he was convicted of stealing penholders and received 12 calendar months imprisonment.

Charles has not been found on the 1851 census; however, his family lived at 35 Peter Street, Liverpool, Lancashire:

Mary Gleeson, head, married, 42, Fringe tassel maker; Mary Gleeson, 15, assists at home; George Gleeson, 12, scholar; Henry Gleeson, 6, scholar; Michael Gleeson, 2. All were born in Liverpool. Mary's husband, Michael, has not been found on the census; on the 1861 census, Mary said she was a widow.

The next conviction of Charles Gleeson was on 7 April 1851 at the Liverpool Quarter Sessions for breaking and entering a dwelling house and stealing four coats. For this, he received 14 months and was whipped. Not long after getting out of gaol, he received three months on 18 August 1852 for being a reputed thief.

On 16 September 1853, after Banns, the marriage took place at the Anglican St Peters Church in Liverpool between:

Charles Leeson, full age, bachelor, plasterer, resides in Christian Street, Liverpool; his father is Michael Leeson, a plasterer.

Margaret Kelly, a minor, spinster, resides in Christian Street, Liverpool; her father is John Kelly, a labourer.

Charles signed, and Margaret made her mark. Witnesses were George Dixon and Esther Hindle.

Charles was once again in trouble when on 14 July 1854, he stole money. At the Liverpool Quarter Sessions on 23 October 1854:

Charles Gleeson *alias* Charley Smith (21) and Richard Barnes (17) were charged with stealing a cash box containing £350, the property of Messrs Langtry. Barnes pleaded guilty, but Gleeson, charged on

a second count with receiving the property knowing it was stolen, conducted his own defence with considerable ability and cross-examined the witnesses with great self-confidence and tact, according to the newspaper.

The principal witness was a boy named Alexander Cruikshank (18), an approver, and according to his account, the robbery was planned at Gleeson's house in Jervis Street. Barnes, who was an office boy in Messrs Langtry's service, got the porter out of the way by giving him 6d to get a glass of ale and then took the cash box and put it in a bucket, which Cruikshank had taken into the office. When outside, Gleeson took the bucket, and they all went towards his house. On the way, an old man joined them and claimed a share for organising the robbery. At Gleeson's, they opened the box and divided the money; the boys slept there the night. Some newspapers claim Gleeson and the old man kept the bulk of the money.

The following morning (Saturday), Gleeson shifted his residence to Everton. On Monday, they all went together, Barnes disguised as a female, from Edge-hill Station to Birmingham, and then the old man disappeared. The other three went to Bristol and then to Bath. Cruikshank left them and went to London. He returned to Liverpool, where he was apprehended.

In the meantime, Margaret Gleeson, who was pregnant, sold off her remaining furniture and joined Charles and Barnes in Bath. She gave birth to her first son, Charles, on 14 August, four days before Charles and Barnes were arrested.

In Court, Gleeson asserted that Barnes had introduced the old man to him as his uncle and the uncle of Cruikshank, who had just returned from Australia; that they came to his house to lodge; that the old man was taking the boys to America and offered to pay his passage to America; that he went to Bristol with them at his request, and it was until his disappearance that he was told anything about the robbery.

The Jury did not believe his version of events and found him guilty of stealing. The Recorder said that verdict prevented him from passing the sentence of transportation; if he had been convicted of receiving, he might have been transported for 14 years. If his previous conviction were known when the indictment was preferred, a different sentence probably would have been handed down. Barnes was sentenced to 4 years of penal servitude and Gleeson to 2 years of hard labour and to be whipped.¹

Charles was released from prison in about October 1856 and joined his family. Margaret gave birth to their second son, William, on 26 August 1857 in Liverpool.

Almost a year later, Charles was caught stealing again – an audacious robbery in Manchester, according to the newspapers.

A daring, deliberately planned robbery and the speedy capture of the thief took place in Manchester on Saturday, 7 July 1858. At about 12:30 pm, a man without a coat entered the shop of Mr Kay, a gunsmith and money changer of 68 Shudehill, and asked for a £5 note in exchange for five sovereigns. Mr Kay took out his note case when the fellow snatched the case out of his hand and took off. Mr Kay started in pursuit, but as he left his shop, a bulldog seized his leg and impeded his progress. An accomplice probably set on the dog. The thief ran down Copperas and Stable streets to the back door of the Hare and Hound public house. He ran through the Hare and Hound and entered Shudehill Street again when he ran into the arms of Sergeant Wall. The prisoner had the case with

¹ Liverpool Mail, 28 October 1854, p7; Northern Daily Times, 20 September 1854, p4; Liverpool Standard and General Commercial Advertiser, 26 September 1854, p12

him, and it contained £575 in Bank of England notes and £5 10s in coins. According to the prisoner's statement, he is Charles Kelly and comes from Dublin. He had been staying at the Ducie Arms, Strangeways. At the Manchester City Police-court on 27 July 1858, described as a very respectably-dressed young man, Charles admitted the charge of stealing £555 and was committed to trial.²

The Prison Registers record:

Charles Kelly *or* Gleeson, 30, married with two children, could read and write imperfectly, Roman Catholic, a barber, was convicted on 2 August 1858 at Manchester Sessions on stealing £555 in bank notes from the person and previous convictions and was sentenced to 7 years. He was received at Wakefield Prison on 28 August 1858 from Manchester. Charles had three previous convictions and three summary convictions. He was transferred to Portland Prison on 20 May 1859 as a Class 1 prisoner. His character and behaviour were good or very good. His previous convictions were listed, as outlined previously.³

On the 1861 census for Portland Prison, Charles is listed as C. K. [Charles Kelly], convict, married, aged 30, a barber, born in Liverpool. Margaret and the two boys have not been found on the 1861 census, although the prison Register says, "His wife was Margaret Gleeson, care of Geo. Childs, Publican, Kingsland Rd, London".

Charles was sent to Gibraltar per *Lord Dalhousie* on 22 November 1861, arriving there on 12 December 1861. Before he left, Margaret visited him on 1 September 1859, had a 40-minute visit on 30 October 1860, and a third visit on 7 August 1861.⁴

On 10 March 1864, he returned from Gibraltar per *S.S. Siprian* and was received at Millbank Prison on 18 March. He was released on License, No 14,107, on 30 March 1864.⁵ His License said he was 5' 8¼" tall, with black hair, grey eyes, a sallow complexion, C.C.J.S.H.H.M and a cross below his right elbow, a figure of a man below his left elbow and a vaccination mark on his left arm. His destination was the Prisoner Aid Society.

Charles re-joined the family, and Henry Leeson was born on 7 September 1865 at 37 New York Street, Manchester. The birth was registered by Charles on 12 December, and he said he was a Commission Agent "Hardwares", of the same address.

In August 1866, he was taken into custody and charged with committing a crime on 28 May. The crime became known as the Manchester Stamp Robbery. It would appear that after the robbery, Charles moved to London and ran a beer house called Crystal Fountain at 78 & 80 Kennington Road, Lambeth.

On 11 December 1866, the trial began, and the newspaper reported:

Charles Batt, 49, Charles Leeson, 36, William Douglas, 34, and Thomas Douglas, 41, were indicted for breaking into and entering the Stamp Office at Manchester, and stealing bill stamps, &c, to the value £10,000, the property of the Hon. Richard Edward Howard. It may seem odd to steal postage stamps, but they could be exchanged for cash at a Post Office and were commonly used for making small payments.

² Leeds Intelligencer, 07 August 1858, p9; Sheffield Daily News, 27 July 1858, p2

³ TNA, HO23/17

⁴ TNA, PCOM2/387

⁵ TNA, HO24/9, PCOM2/12, PCOM2/48, PCOM3/137

The four prisoners all lived in London. Leeson kept a beer house called the Crystal Fountain, Kennington-road; Thomas Douglas lived at 51, Roman-road, Islington; William Douglas lived at Alfred-street, which was very near where Thomas resided, and all four men were companions and had been so both before and after the robbery. The Douglas men were constantly at Leeson's house, and he was an associate of theirs. They were betting men and were in the habit of betting in Hyde Park with Leeson.

It was shown that Batt was seen in the neighbourhood of the Manchester Stamp Office on 25 May, the day before the robbery, and bought a half-crown stamp. Leeson and William Douglas were also seen in the vicinity of the Stamp Office.

Some months later, when Thomas Douglas was apprehended along with his brother at Doncaster races, his luggage and house were searched. In the house of Thomas, several tools of the exact nature and description as those found at the Stamp-office. Some iron wedges were found, such as had been pressed into the safe, and similar tools were found in the house of William Douglas, some crucibles, and about forty precious stones that had apparently been taken out of signet rings.

The robbery was committed by entering a hole from an adjoining house wall between Saturday night and Monday morning. The safe which held the stamps had been locked up. It was removed from its place, deposited on some bales of cloth to deaden the sound, and operated upon by wedges and crowbars until the burglars opened it.

The whole affair had been conducted in a deliberate, business-like, scientific manner, and the burglars got safely away with the £10,000 worth of stamps. Except for a single £1 bill stamp, none of the stolen property has been recovered.

A rather disreputable witness named Shaw said he heard the prisoners arranging for the robbery and, after it took place, saw numbers of stamps in their possession. They had champagne supper and gave other indications of being well off.

The defence in each case was an alibi, but this failed to convince the Jury, who found all the prisoners guilty. Several previous convictions were proved against each of the prisoners, and Leeson and the two Douglas men were sentenced to 15 years penal servitude each and Batt to eight years penal servitude.⁶

Charles Leeson *alias* Charles Kelly, *alias* Charles Gleeson, 36, married with three children, was convicted on 3 December 1866 at Manchester of warehouse breaking and larceny with previous convictions and was sentenced to 15 years Penal Servitude. From Salford Prison, he was transferred to Millbank Prison on 26 December 1866, where he was described as Roman Catholic but Protestant on entering Millbank, a plasterer, and his behaviour was good. His wife, Margaret Leeson, lived at 9 Webber Street, New Cut Lambeth, London.⁷

Margaret was allowed to see Charles on an order from Parliament dated 4 June 1867 and visited with the children on 10 June 1867. She visited Charles twice more, with a child and cousin (date unknown) and with a child and uncle on 23 September 1867. Charles boarded the *Hougoumont* on 30 September 1867 for Western Australia.

On arrival at Fremantle, Charles was assigned number 9804. He was described as:

⁶ London Evening Standard, 12 December, 1866, p4: Manchester Courier, 11 December 1866, p8:

⁷ TNA, PCOM2/51. Charles was convicted with Wm Douglas *alias* Wm Hathway, who was also transported to Western Australia.

Charles Leeson, 30, 5'7½", brown hair, grey eyes, long face, a dark complexion, strong build, a plasterer, married with three children. He had a female and ship tattooed on his left arm and C.G.J.H and a cross on his right arm.⁸ His wife "Martha" lived at Crystal Fountain, Kensington Road, Lambeth.

At Perth, on 26 August 1868, Charles returned from Public Works drunk and was placed in bread and water for three days. A month later, he was gambling with playing cards and placed on bread and water for seven days. Charles absconded from Perth Prison on 19 January 1869. He may have gone to South Australia and then to Melbourne, as on the 1881 and 1891 census, he claims he was born in both places.

Charles returned to England and became a successful businessman and apparently a law-abiding citizen. About eight months before his sentence expired, he was taken into custody and charged with being found feloniously at large in England without lawful excuse before the term's expiration. Charles Leeson, *otherwise* Gleeson, *otherwise* Kelly, *otherwise* Powell, 46, was now an Omnibus Proprietor. He was tried at the Central Criminal Court on 7 May 1881.

The main points from his trial:

Policeman William Reader said that on 7 April, he apprehended the prisoner at the corner of St. Mark's Road, Camberwell, about 350 yards from 45 Grosvenor Park, where the prisoner lived. On the left arm, there was an urn tattooed; on the right arm, there was a cross with the letters "C. G." or "G. G." on the top, and under it, "I. H. S." and "M. M".

Superintendent James Jacob Thompson said he arrested Charles in 1866 in London in connection with a robbery in Manchester. I knew him then in the name of Charles Leeson; he was then keeping a beer shop on Kennington Road. Thompson picked Charles out in a police line-up.

The principal warder of Millbank, John Hook, said he escorted him to Sheerness and saw him board the *Hougoumont*.

Warder Frederick Liggins, now at Manchester, said he was a warder in the convict prison at Fremantle, Western Australia, in 1867. He went to Newgate Prison and did not recognise Charles at first; he has got a great deal stouter, and his face is fuller, but now he is sure he is the same man.⁹

Police Inspector John O'Callaghan recalled he was on duty when the prisoner was bought into Bow Street. I said to the prisoner, "We say you are Charles Powell, who was convicted in Belgium in February 1878 and liberated from there about four months ago. The charge against you now is that you are at large while under sentence of transportation; We believe that, as Charles Leeson, you were convicted at Manchester for a stamp robbery in 1866 and sentenced to 15 years transportation and that you escaped from Western Australia in 1869;" He said, "I have heard all you say, and I say nothing; I decline to make any statement whatever." He was in custody and visited by a woman in the cell, the same woman I saw when I went to 45 Grosvenor Road, Camberwell. I found a safe there, and at my request, she opened it, and I found there these documents, amongst them these two receipts. The defence objected to these being received in evidence in the absence of proof by the person making them and under the circumstances in which they were taken possession of by the witness, there being no actual proof that the safe in which they were found was the property of the prisoner. The Recorder declined to admit the documents.

⁸ SROWA, Acc 129/1-32

⁹ Frederick Liggins, aged 27, applied to come to Western Australia on 13 January 1863. He arrived on the *Clyde* with his wife and child. Frederick was back in England by May 1873.

The Court decided that the case must go to the Jury, but the onus of proof lay with the prosecution. Not Guilty.¹⁰ The prison term of three years in Belgium has not been found.¹¹

The Newgate Prison register:

Charles Leeson *ors* Gleeson *ors* Kelly *ors* Powell was committed 14 April 1881 at Bow Street and tried 2 May 1881 at Central Criminal Court for the felony of being at large before the expiration of a term of Penal Servitude of 15 years from 3 December 1866. He was acquitted and released on 7 May 1881. Charles was 46, 5'8", could read and write imperfectly, was an Omnibus Proprietor, had numerous tattoos, was married, weighed 11 stone 6 pounds, was Protestant and said he was born in Melbourne.¹²

The 1881 census for 45 Grosvenor Park, Newington, St Saviour Southwark:

Charles Powell, head, married, 50, plasterer, born in South Australia

Margaret, wife, 45, born in Manchester

Henry, son, 15, scholar, born in Manchester

Mary A Clarke, servant, 25, born in Middlesex

On the next census, Charles was still living at 45 Grosvenor Park, Newington, St Saviour Southwark; however, he was not recorded.

Margaret Powell, wife, 54, living on her means, born in Liverpool

Martha Kingston, widow, 34, general servant, born in Lewisham

By the 1894 Electoral roll, he and Margaret were living at 121 Grosvenor Park, Newington.

Charles Leeson Powell died on 10 October 1895, aged 62, at his home at 121 Grosvenor Park, Newington, and was buried on 15 October at the South Metropolitan Cemetery, also called West Norwood Cemetery. Margaret purchased the private grave, No 26577 in section 25, un-consecrated ground, for £3.3.6. on 14 October.

Margaret Leeson Powell was buried on 6 August 1896, aged 61, with Charles.¹³

Will: Charles Leeson Powell of 121 Grosvenor Park, St Mary Newington, Surrey, died 10 October 1895. Probate was granted in London on 4 January 1896 to Margaret Leeson Powell, the widow. Effects: £752 18s 6d.

This is the Last Will and Testament of me Charles Leeson Powell of No 37 Grosvenor Park in the Parish of Saint Mary Newington in the County of Surrey Gentleman First I direct that payment may be made by my Executrix hereinafter names of all my just debts Funeral and testamentary Expenses Then I Give devise and bequeath unto my dearly beloved Wife Margaret Leeson Powell All my Monies Securities for Money Household Furniture Books plate Linen China Wearing Apparel Life Insurances and all my Estate and Effects both real and personal and of whatever description soever that may belong to me or that I may die possessed of or be entitles to at the time of my decease to and for her own sole separate and absolute use and benefit And I direct that the same shall be free from the debts and control of any future Husband And the receipt alone shall be a sufficient

¹⁰ Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 11 January 2021), May 1881, trial of CHARLES LEESON, alias GLEESON, alias POWELL (46) (t18810502-481).

¹¹ The full transcript is at:

<https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=def1-481-18810502&div=t18810502-481#highlight>

¹² TNA, PCOM2/220

¹³ Charles is buried down 10 feet, and Margaret at 9 feet.

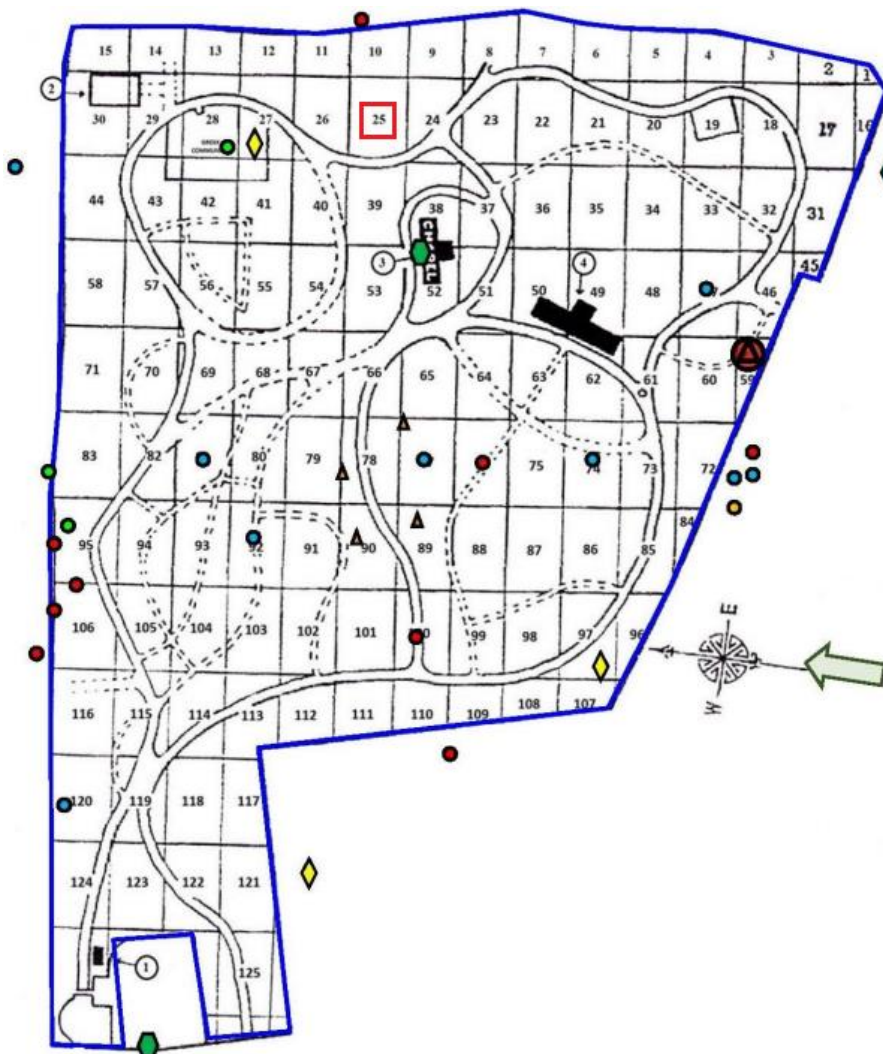
discharge And I hereby nominate Constitute and appoint my said dear Wife Margaret Leeson Powell Sole Executrix hereof and hereby revoke and make void all former Will or Wills by me made and declare this to be my last Will and Testament whereof I the said Charles Leeson Powell have hereunto set and subscribed my hand this twenty fifth day of October in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and eighty - Charles Leeson Powell-

Signed by the said Charles Leeson Powell the testator as and for his last Will and Testament in the presence of us both being present at the same time who in his presence at his request and in the presence of each other have hereunto subscribed our names as Witnesses M.A. Gabb, 6 Lorrimore Sq, Walworth S.E. Charles Humphrey 33 Finchley Road, Walworth

Grant: Be it known, that at date hereunder written, the last Will and Testament of Charles Leeson Powell of 121 Grosvenor Park St Mary Newington in the County of Surrey formerly of 37 Grosvenor Park aforesaid deceased, who died the 10 October 1895 at 121 Grosvenor Parl aforesaid was proved and registered in the Principal Probate registry of Her Majesty's High Court of Justice, and that administration of the personal estate of the said deceased was granted by the aforesaid Court to Margaret Leeson Powell of 121 Grosvenor Park aforesaid Widow the Relict the sole Executrix named in the Will she having been first sworn well and faithfully to administer the same.

Dated 4 January 1896.

Gross value of Personal Estate: £752.18.6. Net: £427.3.5.



West Norwood Cemetery, Conservation Plan, Part 1.¹⁴ The various coloured marks are where bombs landed in WW2.

Children of Charles and Margaret Leeson or Gleeson

Charles Gleeson, born 14 August 1854 at Bath, Somerset, and baptised 17 September 1854 at St Josephs, Liverpool, son of Charles Gleeson and Margaret née Kelly. Godparents: James Regan and Ann Dillow.

Charles first married on 25 February 1879 at John the Evangelist, Willesden, by licence: Charles Leeson Powell, 25, bachelor, Omnibus Proprietor, Lambeth, father Charles Leeson Powell, a slater.

Elizabeth Sarah Blake, 27, spinster, 16 Cambridge Gardens, father William Blake, farmer.

Both signed. Witnesses Catherine Maitland and George Langley

1881 census, at 41 St Marks Road, Lambeth:

Charles Powell, married, 27, Omnibus proprietor, born in Bath, Somerset, England

Elizabeth, 29, wife, born in Netley Marsh, Hampshire, England

Charles P Powell, son, 1, born in Lambeth, Surrey, England

William H Powell, 1, born in Lambeth, Surrey, England

Kate Blake, Sister in law, Single, 21, Nurse, born Netley Marsh, Hampshire, England

Elizabeth Sarah Louisa Powell was buried on 30 September 1886 at the Norwood Cemetery, aged 35, from 21 Cooks Road, Kennington.

1891 census for 21 Cooks Rd, Newington:

Charles Powell, head, widower, 36, manager omnibus yard, born Bath, Somerset

Children - Percy 11, William 9, Margaret 8, George 6, Louis 5 - all born on Lambeth

Kate Blake, sister-in-law, 30, housekeeper, born in Netley, Hampshire

28 September 1892 at St John's Church, Brixton, by banns:

Charles Leeson Powell, 38, widower, Omnibus Manager, 13 Millbrook Rd, father Charles Leeson Powell, Omnibus Proprietor

Kate Blake, 32, spinster, 13 Millbrook Rd, father William Blake, farmer.

Both signed, and the witnesses were H Leeson Powell and Louisa Bathurst.

Charles and Kate had three children – Ernest, Nellie and Arthur.

William Leeson, born 26 August 1857, was baptised on 13 September 1857 at St Francis Xavier, Liverpool, son of Charles Leeson and Margaret née Kelly. Godparents Charles Byrnes and Catharine Clarey.

No further trace of him has been found.

Henry Leeson, 1865, Registration district of Chorlton, Lancashire.

15 September 1897, St Paul's Church, St Mary's parish Newington, by licence:

¹⁴ <https://www.westnorwoodcemetery.org/plans-and-proposals>

Harry Powell Leeson, 32, bachelor, Gentleman, Newington, father Charles Powell Leeson (deceased)
Bus Proprietor
Ellen Ada Palmer, 21, spinster, 244 Camberwell New Road, father George Palmer (deceased)
Ironmonger
Both signed and the witnesses were Charles Powell Leeson and Emma Palmer.

1911 census, the family lived in Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. Henry Powell, 43, was a
Chauffeur (private service), Ellen 35, Eric 12, Leslie 10, Doris 4 and his mother-in-law, Emma Palmer,
78, a widow.