

A CHANGE OF MIND and BEGINNING THE HUNT

For many years I felt disdain for those who were interested in their family tree. After all one can claim credit neither for who our ancestors happen to be nor what they have done or accomplished over the years. That began to change when I discovered the Family Tree that came into my possession many years ago.

The tree was on a rolled parchment and it seemed important to preserve the information in a more permanent way. The original parchment, now in the possession of my niece, Bonnie Simpson was copied in beautiful calligraphy by my cousin, Margaret Donald. That large framed copy hangs in my living room and most members of the family have small copies of it.

Though I often passed by The Tree I felt only vague interest in it until one day I noticed the information printed beneath the name of Sir Ashton Lever. It read :

“Founder, Collector and sole owner of the Famous Leverian Museum, Leicester Sq. London; which was afterwards sold by Lottery for which Special Act of Parliament was granted. Parts of the Leverian Museum are incorporated in the British Museum,”

My interest was piqued and thus began my hunt.

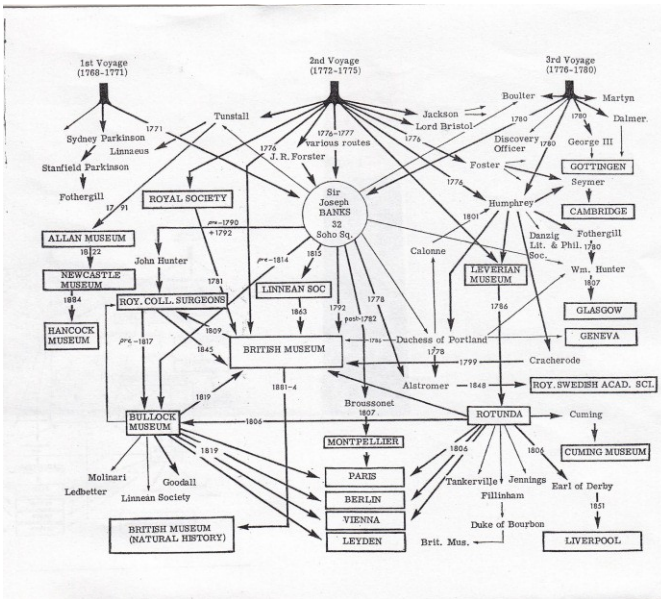
I wrote to the British Museum requesting information. Presumably because my letter was from Vancouver they put me in touch with a Peter J. Whitehead, whom they knew had an interest in the museum and was coming to Vancouver for the celebration of the anniversary of Captain Cook’s visit to this area. But our paths crossed, his to Vancouver and mine for England already booked in 1989.

Materials for this book are from several sources. Those from the first journey to England took me to the British Museum and recently the internet has provided many interesting accounts.

Other sources are from Great Aunt Kate to be found in the chapter on her, and an article by W.J. Smith titled *Alkington Hall and The Lever Family* in the Alkington Manor and Hall chapter.

The majority of information, however, was gathered when a second cousin on my Mother's side, Keith Risdale, invited me to stay with him and his wife Sheila. We went to many places in England seeking the answers to our hunt.

I still have the letter Peter wrote to me at the request of the Museum but his interest was only peripheral, his research and recordings having to do with Captain Cook's voyages and the voluminous number of articles Cook collected. The diagram that Peter sent me shows from which voyage articles were collected and the places that acquired them. Among those places is the Leverian Museum and the other museums that later purchased various sections of the Leverian Museum



There were many decisions to be made. I hope those decisions and the resulting book will make for interesting reading