

## Robert Marks' speech at the 1988 family reunion

October, St Leonards School, Brighton  
Organised by Geoff Lionel Marks, 1916–2004

My name tag is on my coat, over the chair in the other room, but I'm Robert Marks, Leslie's son, Ernest's grandson.<sup>1</sup> And I have a few notes and I'll just quickly go through them.

1954 was the first time that a reigning monarch, Elizabeth II, had visited Australia. What's that got to do with the Marks get-together, I hear you say? Well, as an eight year old, I and perhaps Jono and others, watched — or, as I've got here, did but see the Queen passing by — from a room in the Windsor Hotel in Spring Street in the City. This room in the Windsor Hotel was the home of Uncle Rudolph.

Now, Uncle Rudolph wasn't my direct uncle, he wasn't my father's direct uncle. He was my father's father's — Ernest's — uncle, Because Uncle Rudolph Benjamin<sup>2</sup> was the brother — the half brother — of Jane Benjamin,<sup>3</sup> who is the great grandmother — my great grandmother — and in fact she and Bernard are the reason why we're all here because we're all descended from Jane and Bernard.<sup>4</sup> And the photos of Jane and Bernard are in pride of place at the back of the mantelpiece.

In fact, if you're wondering what your relationship is, the Marks family tree is over here, which has been mentioned in the past and could I just repeat Tom's invitation for people fill in the names of spouses and offspring which haven't been included, and see who your second or third or perhaps fourth cousins are?

Speaking of third cousins, as you know, third cousins are quite distant. If first cousins have grandparents in common, and second cousins have great grandparents in common, then third cousins have great great grandparents in common. And there are a lot of second and third cousins here today.

In fact I can remember meeting a woman who was a third cousin of mine but I didn't realise at first that she was a third cousin of mine. It was in a first-year chemistry tute at Melbourne University and there was this woman. Now, I'd been at Scotch — I know some of you were at Grammar — but I was at Scotch, and there was this rather bright, attractive woman in my chemistry tute. And, as I say, I'd been at an all-boys school and I was rather unaccustomed to dealing with bright, attractive women, apart of course from my relations. And I was a bit intimidated by this woman until I found that she was a third cousin and then it was alright because she was in the family. The woman in question was Jo Starr, and Jo's mother, Diana,<sup>5</sup> is here today with her fiancé.<sup>6</sup> And we're pleased to have you, even if you're descended from Fanny,<sup>7</sup> who

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1. Leslie Magnus Marks, 1918–1981. Ernest Norman Marks, 1888–1971.

3. Rudolph David Benjamin, 1868–1959; no, the brother.

3. Jane Jennie Marks née Benjamin, 1858–1909. She was Rudolph's sister.

4. Bernard Marks, 1851–1915.

5. Diana Miriam Starr née Goldsmid, 1915–2013.

6. Andrew Noel Fraser, 1916–2008.

7. No, from Bernard's sister, Victoria Rebecca Marks née Marks, 1861–1901, her maternal grandmother.

was Bernard's sister.

Now Bernard was six months old when his father and mother, Marcus and Henrietta,<sup>8</sup> together with some other families, chartered a ship of about 800 tons, and made the long voyage out from Southampton around Africa, past the Cape of Good Hope — remember there wasn't a Suez Canal in the 1850s — and east to Melbourne. And if, as family lore has it, Bernard learnt to walk on the ship — the name of which I haven't got<sup>9</sup> — then, since Bernard was born almost 137 years ago, just over, on the 8th of October 1851, then I think you'll agree that it must have been 1852 that the family arrived in Australia, rather than 1851.<sup>10</sup> Joan,<sup>11</sup> my mother, was the first to point this out to me.

Bernard married Jane on 12th January 1876, and when Bernard was 37 years old, firmly established in Melbourne, just over a hundred years ago, on the 11th of October 1888, my father's father, Ernest Norman Marks, was born — one of Bernard's sons. I was remarking on the fact that they were both born in October — both were Librans — and I said, "Well we Pisceans don't believe in astrology, so ..."

Anyway, in 1970, Ernest, my grandfather, one of Bernard's sons, at my request, made a series of tapes of reminiscences, at my request, and then at the request of other family members.

I'll tell you what happened: in 1969 I'd gone overseas to study in Boston and my maternal grandfather<sup>12</sup> sent me a tape, recounting how he had made a trip to America just before the First World War. And on the way back from America on the *Mauritania*, the captain announced that that night they were going to be passing the *Titanic* on its maiden voyage. And it wasn't until they got back to Southampton that they found out what had happened to the *Titanic* that very night, 14/15 April 1912.

And when my other grandfather sent this tape to me I thought it would be a good idea if both of them did. And, anyway, other people in the family agreed with this, and the result is a series of tapes. And I've edited this tape down to about 25 minutes and I want to play this to you now. It's Ernest, one of the five sons (and two daughters) of Bernard and Jane, talking about his parents and their early life.<sup>13</sup>

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8. Mark Marks, 1815–1868, and Hannah Marks née Harris, 1817–1897.

9. It was the 210-ton barque, *The Atalanta*; Mark owned it outright.

10. The voyage was from Liverpool to Sydney, from 1st May 1853 to 4th September 1853. See <https://www.agsm.edu.au/bobm/family/MMfamily.pdf>

11. Joan Sarah Deakin Marks, 1921–2003.

12. John Bertram Deakin, 1887–1977.

13. Listen at <https://www.agsm.edu.au/bobm/Audio/ENM1970Jan-1.mp3>