

John William Grainger (1891 – 1938)

John William Grainger was born in Clay Cross in 1891. His parents were Emlen Grainger (1860 – 1939) and Eliza Case (1865 – 1928). John William was their third child. John William was only two months old when the Census of 1891 was taken. John William was living with his parents and two older siblings on Alma Square in Clay Cross (Clay Lane). His father was employed as coal miner.

Until the early 19th century, Clay Cross was a small village known as Clay Lane, but increasing demand for coal and other minerals trebled the population by 1840. The railway 'mania' of the 1840s witnessed expansion northwards facilitated by the Clay Cross tunnel dug in 1837-38. Whilst tunnelling under Clay Cross they discovered vast quantities of commercial grade coal. Clay Cross became a boom town. The 'Liverpool Party' of Stephenson engineers formed the Clay Cross Company in 1839 which they funded from their considerable resources. As well as sinking a number of shafts, there were coke ovens, brickworks, limeworks, iron furnaces and a foundry. The Stephensons also built more than 400 miners cottages. Alma Square was built by the Stephensons.

On the 1901 Census, the family had moved to Whitwell in Derbyshire and they were living on Colliery Row. John William was 10 years old. Whitwell Colliery was sunk by the Shireoaks Colliery Company in 1890-1891. Colliery Row had been built by the Shireoaks Colliery Company to provide homes for the miners, and distinguished by the black coloured brickwork at each end of the row of terraced houses. The map below shows how close Colliery Row was to the colliery.



On the 1911 Census, John William had left the family home and was living at 21 Barker Street in Mexborough. He was boarding with the Dean family and working as a coal miner, probably at the Denaby Main Colliery, which is very close to Mexborough.

In 1916 John William married Elizabeth Wilmott (1893 – 1965). They had six children

Robert Emlen Grainger	1917 - 1938	(Killed in same disaster)
Grace Elizabeth Grainger	1918 - 2000	
Lilian D Grainger	1922 -	
John William Grainger	1924 - 1995	
Charlotte Grainger	1926 -	
Marina Grainger	1935 -	

Robert Emlen was killed while working alongside his father. Both were working as road repairers.

At the time of the disaster, John William with his family were living at 27 Crown Street in Clowne.

A year after John William was killed, his relatives placed several 'In Memoriam' notices in The 'Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald'

GRAINGER – Treasured memories of my dear brothers, JOHN and AMBROSE, also nephew EMLEN killed in Markham Pit Disaster May 10th 1938.

“Their death was sudden, the blow severe,
We little thought their end so near”

From Lawrence, Lily and Johnnie. Clowne

GRAINGER – In loving memory of JOHN WILLIAM GRAINGER and ROBERT EMLEM GRAINGER Clowne, who were killed in the Markham Colliery Explosion, May 10th 1938.

“Our hearts still ache with sadness,
Our eyes shed many a tear:
God alone knows how we miss you,
As ends the first sad year”
From loving Wife and Mother and Family

Parents

Father: Emlen Grainger (1860 – 1939)

Emlen Grainger was born in Clay Cross in July 1860. His parents were John Grainger (1827 – 1889) and Anne Dove (1829 – 1879). On the 1961 Census, Emlen was living with his parents at 149 Chapel Row in Clay Cross. His father was employed as a coal miner. In 1871, Emlen

was 10 years old and still living in Clay Cross on Tunnell Row. On the 1881 Census Emlen, aged 21 had left home and was boarding with Kirkland family at 103 Newstead Colliery, Newstead Priory. He was employed as a coal miner at the Newstead Colliery which had opened in 1875.

In 1885 he married Eliza Case (1865 – 1928) in North Wingfield. On the 1891 Census, Emlen, his wife, and three children were living on Alma Square. John William had just been born. Emlen and his growing family were living on Colliery Row Whitwell on the 1901 Census. In 1911 Emlen was living at 64 Neale Street in Clowne.

Emlen witnessed the death of two sons, one severely injured and the death of a grandson in 1938. He never recovered from the effects of this blow and five months before his death, while spending a holiday with his oldest daughter, Sarah, he had a seizure.

He died on 9 June 1939 at the age of 79. He had been an underground miner for 56 years and had lived in Clowne for thirty years.

Mother: Eliza Case (1865 - 1928)

Eliza Case was born in Stonehouse, Plymouth in 1865. The Royal Navy, at the time, had significant operations in Stonehouse. Her parents were Stephen Case (1837 – 1870) and May Ann Laurence (1836 – 1909). Her father died when Eliza was five years old. On the 1871 Census, Eliza was living with her widowed mother and two older siblings, in Leicester at 21 Milton Street. Her mother married Abraham Kenning on 14 February 1881, and on the Census of that year, Eliza is living with her mother, stepfather and siblings in Clay Cross. Her stepfather was employed as an earthenware dealer.

In 1885 Eliza married Emlen Grainger in North Wingfield, which is just to the north of Clay Cross.

Between 1887 and 1907, Eliza and Emlen have 10 children, 5 boys and 5 girls.

Eliza died on the 23 August 1928 at the age of 62 in Clowne.

Wife: Elizabeth Wilmott (1893 - 1965)

Elizabeth Wilmott was born 23 September 1893 in Hucknall. Her parents were Robert Wilmott (1872 - 1947) and Elizabeth Hall (1871 - 1921). On the 1901 Census Elizabeth was living with her parents in Hucknall. Her father was employed as a hewer. Her father had been born in Hucknall, while her mother came from Pelsall in the West Midlands.

She married John William in 1916. Elizabeth witnessed the death of her husband and son in the 1938 disaster. On the 1939 Census Elizabeth is living with her surviving children at 27 Crown Street in Clowne.