

## **The *Ambition & Destiny* Series Character Profiles**

**NB. Details are limited so as not to introduce spoilers.**

The *Ambition & Destiny* Series was inspired by real life events discovered through family history research. The information below gives an insight into the real characters who formed the basis of the stories. As the events took place nearly two hundred years ago, however, all characterisation in the books is fictitious. Names have been changed and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

### ***Condemned by Fate***

#### **Charles Jackson**

Charles is the principle character in *Condemned by Fate* the prequel to The *Ambition & Destiny* Series. His story is based on the life of my great, great, great grandfather. At the beginning of *Condemned by Fate* he is depicted as a farmer. This is based on the fact that his father was a farmer in Aldridge and I imagined that Charles followed in his footsteps. When he left Aldridge, and went to Birmingham, he spent some time working at a brassfoundry, a business his father was also involved in.

He was in Birmingham during the early days of his marriage to Mary and his son William was born there. His daughter Mary-Ann was born in Aldridge thirteen months later and so the family must have moved back to Aldridge in either late 1841 or early 1842.

I decided to write Charles as a fairly laid back character based on a snippet of information I found about him in a newspaper. The text included the following:

*The conduct of the youth [...] was confident and unembarrassed [...] He did not exhibit any fear or doubt ...*

Perhaps he was a bit of a lad, back in the day!

The beginning of *Condemned by Fate*, when Charles meets Mary, is complete fiction. Once he leaves her father's farm, however, a lot of the story is based on real life events.

A short history of Mary's early years is included in *Condemned by Fate* (most of which is fiction), but her real story starts after the end of the book.

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### **SPOILER ALERT**

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If you haven't yet read *Condemned by Fate*, and don't want any spoilers, don't read beyond this point

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## *Hooks & Eyes*

### **Mary Jackson**

The central character in *Hooks & Eyes* (Part 1), Mary's story is loosely based on the life of my great, great, great grandmother. My family history research revealed that she was widowed at the age of twenty-three and left to look after her two young children, William and Mary-Ann. Knowing this made me wonder how she survived in the 1840s with no welfare state and little chance of work.

My first thought was that she must have ended up in the workhouse. When I was unable to find any evidence of this, however, I came up with other scenarios. I know that at the time of her husband's death she lived with (or close to) his family in Aldridge, a village in rural Staffordshire. By 1849 she was living in Handsworth (Staffordshire) but some time before then she met Mr Wetherby, a manufacturer based in Birmingham. How and why all this happened I'll never know.

Using this and information I learned about the way of life at the time, I aimed to piece together a story that could plausibly resemble the truth. With no knowledge even of her existence before I started tracing my family history, however, the story that evolved is purely fiction and could be a million miles away from what actually happened.

### **Mr Wetherby**

Along with Mary, Mr Wetherby is the main character in the book. From my research I know the man who inspired him was born in Gloucestershire in 1820, but without a penny to his name he made his way to Birmingham sometime in the 1840's. He was typical of the time in that he started with nothing but due to the Industrial Revolution, and a lot of determination, he ended up doing very nicely for himself. His main business was making Hooks & Eyes (the small fastening you still get in the backs of bra's and on other items of clothing), although he did move into button making as well.

Being a successful businessman seemed to give him a lot of power and status. By Books 2 and 3, he was very prominent within the Birmingham Conservative Association. He also seems to have been a man who usually got his own way. As I was writing, a phrase I often reminded myself of was: "Whatever Mr Wetherby wants, Mr Wetherby gets." It didn't always work out like that, of course (it wouldn't be a good story if it did), but it was a useful rule of thumb.

I have had some interesting responses to Mr Wetherby from the people who have read my early drafts, so much so that the storyline I've created for him is one of the reasons why these books will be accompanied by legal disclaimers to make sure readers know that this really is a work of fiction.

### **Sarah-Ann**

When I started researching my family history, Sarah-Ann was little more than a background character. She was a sister of Mary's late husband (Charles) and, along with five other sisters, I expected that the only time she would appear in the story was at events such as weddings and funerals. That was before I came across a bit of information that forced me to reconsider her role. Now, rather than being in the background, she is plays a main role throughout the series.

The only things I know about her early years are that as a teenager she moved to Birmingham and lived with her sister who was married to a brewer. At some point she returned to rural Staffordshire to be with her parents, but ultimately she returned to Birmingham and married a family acquaintance. Pretty much everything else about her in *Hooks & Eyes* is fictional.

In the early drafts, I didn't get the reaction to Sarah-Ann that I expected. I saw her as a likeable person, with a few flaws, but it seemed that the readers only saw her flaws and took a dislike to

her. I have now amended the story and hope that she comes across as more of a victim (to some extent) than a villain.

### **William**

Mary's son William is mentioned briefly in *Condemned by Fate*. At the time, he was a two year old who took his mother's attention away from her sick husband. By the start of *Hooks & Eyes* he has grown into a responsible five year old who is instructed to look after his mother as they set off on their journey to Birmingham.

William's story is based on the life of my great grandfather. He died long before even my grandfather was born, and so I have no knowledge of his personality. From what I've learned, however, I've portrayed him as a quiet, unassuming character, who is often dominated by those around him. His role in *Hooks & Eyes* starts off slowly but as the book goes on, and he grows into an adult, we see more of him.

In the early years, much of his story is about his relationship with Mr Wetherby. By Part 2, he takes over from Mr Wetherby as the main male lead character, and Part 3 is essentially his story. For those of you who have read *Lord of the Rings*, I like to think William is a little like the character Sam Gamgee - just a side character at the start of the book but by the end, he is the one you are rooting for.

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Additional characters from Parts 2 and 3 of the series will be added closer to the dates of publication

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