

John 'Jack' Fogo  
(1790 - 1839)

known as the  
celebrated

# *Frosty-faced Fogo*

His life, times and  
descendants

Robert C. Senior 2023

This is a revised and much enlarged version of the work I issued 'online' in 2016 [from which I had just 20 copies privately printed]. This new version is also available online at the same address: <https://frostyfacedfogo.butleigh.org/>

Again, I shall have a small number of copies privately printed. The work is entirely the result of my own research and study and any or all mistakes, omissions etc. are mine alone. Almost all images are sourced from either my own collection and library plus a few from other sources. I retain the copyright for this work.



Prigs

Take out and Muzzler

Fancyana, Rum cove

Tom Dodd



"Order! Order!"

Macers

Tulip, and Fancy  
"maxing it"

Swell cove

Chaunting

Blown

Boniface

Fancy-man & Ma'am Puss

Rent collector and his Old Hen

*Cock and Hen*—a man and his wife "for the time being." A *Cock-and-hen Club*, is that accurate admixture of the sexes over their *heavy wet* and inspiring *max*, met with in Cockaigne ale-shops, chiefly on St. Monday evenings; when all present should - pair on, which enables them, occasionally, to "pair off," as they do in the hon. H.C. A regular *chairman*, and a Mr. Vice, "keep order," if possible, for the *chaunt*; the ladies expect to be called upon *in turn*, and get fidgetty (whilst sitting on each flashman's knee) if they are not—. All classes are admitted, "except working folks and their brats; as for, them is vhat I hates," says Mrs. Lapstone. Excepting the two officers just named, and the Swell coves and Rum-ones on the *right*, one of whom is "Tom Dudding," a companion's hat, most of the company *present* have been *had up*, guess. The chaunt is going on, and so is the *Mill*; and as 'tis now, "according to Cocker," "very nice time I don't think," every one is talking *ad libitum*, notwithstanding 'the *Rules*' says "No; you shant do no such thing." 'A respectable boot-club' we observe, is held here weekly, by "Joey Mew," and, on the other side of "the henemy," hangs "Fancyana," a Chronology of fighting events, 900 in number.

Of manners loose, and drapery tight, a  
Three *Motts* thus pass each sainted night  
In Gray's Inn-Lane—the Peacock, *hight*.



## FOREWORD



My interest in Frosty-faced Fogo, or Frosty as I prefer to call him, came about as a result of tracing my mother's ancestry. My mother, Joan Senior (née Cheetham, *left*) died in 1998 and thereafter I decided to look seriously into our family genealogy, particularly the female lines. After discovering around 15,000 direct ancestors I took a break from this research for about ten years, because it was proving too difficult at that time to follow some of the most obscure lines.

With more records becoming available on the internet, from 'FindMyPast' and 'Ancestry', plus also data found in the British Library's 'British Newspaper Archives,' I was able to make a great deal further progress. One of my ancestors who had proved difficult to trace was Elizabeth Fogo, born 1818 in London, whose illegitimate daughter Anne, born in Liverpool circa 1846 [but neither baptised nor registered it seems, though possibly recorded in the lost Liverpool Workhouse records], had married a chimney sweep, William Lewis, in Manchester in 1864. The surname Fogo is pretty rare and I had previously guessed that the John Fogo who died in Liverpool Workhouse in 1829 was Elizabeth's father, but could find no *proof* of their relationship. From the subsequently discovered baptismal records in Haberdashers Hall it became possible to re-construct the family and, after a few false starts, I was able to

complete the tree, particularly when I found the 1829 burial of his youngest daughter, Ann Catherine, which had been wrongly transcribed.

The story that then unfolded was amazing. Unless one's ancestors come from wealthy backgrounds, held important positions or performed remarkable feats, one is able to discover little more about them other than a few details of their births, marriages and deaths. Frosty, though born illegitimate himself became a notable 'character' and celebrity in his day. He had come from the lowest position in society and was always living on the edge of poverty, having to depended upon his wits and talents to survive but had successfully made a name for himself. His activities were widely reported during his lifetime, and he was held in such affection that memories of him lived on long after his death.

John Fogo, more commonly called 'Jack', or Frosty-faced Fogo, was born around 1790, almost certainly the illegitimate son of a single mother and his nickname was derived from the pock-marked visage he bore as a result of childhood smallpox. Aged 23 he had learned a profession, shoemaking, and married and but around this time he also became a follower of pugilism, or bare-knuckle boxing. He learned the art of setting up the boxing ring, arranging fights and holding bets, of writing poems and songs (chaunts) about the boxers and acted as a master of ceremonies at public events and entertainments. He earned money on the side by selling broadsheets of his poems, or chaunts, and by brewing and selling cheap gin, called *blue-ruin*. Unfortunately, his interest coincided with the decline and corruption of the boxing world. It became increasingly harder to promote and organise matches and despite a great deal of travelling and effort it was almost impossible to make a living from it. His wife had died in 1824 leaving him with four, children under the age of ten and thereafter he seems to have taken up with another, unidentified, woman who almost certainly seems to have had at least one other child by him. The struggle to financially survive plus the need to cope with probable addictions to alcohol and gambling may be the reason why Frosty seems to have neglected his children. They,

unlike him, remained illiterate, and he seems to have practically abandoned them to their fate leaving his eldest boy, at least, to live an almost feral life on the streets. The most successful of his children was his daughter Jane, who married in Liverpool in 1838, while her father was still alive, though his own situation at that time was desperate bordering upon hopeless.

Frosty seems to have been self-taught, and like his near contemporary Charles Dickens, who came from a similar background and place, showed that he had the *ability* to make an upward trajectory. Dickens certainly knew of him and probably had even met him - Frosty is the *only* actual person to appear in a Dickens novel. He is mentioned in Dickens' unfinished novel Edwin Drood. Frosty however, concentrated on the sport he followed rather than follow and develop any literary inclinations, becoming more addicted to the gin he was making than the poetry he was writing. A contemporary description of his life indicates the large amounts of alcohol he had to consume daily in order to network all his contacts. He visited many public houses every day in his search for current boxing news. Several authors reported that he was an authority, having all the facts and figures about boxing and previous matches at his fingertips. Being not averse to a little gambling, the combination of his unfortunate habits led his slow decline and final demise. In 1831 he departed London on an unsuccessful trip to the North and rather than return as a penniless failure to his impoverished family and face his creditors, he decided to start a new life in Liverpool.

His eldest daughter Elizabeth was brought before the Old Bailey for theft in that year 1831 and his son John was imprisoned in Newgate in 1832 for pickpocketing. Both later joined him in Liverpool, as did the rest of his family. At first he seemed to recover his former position and even set himself up as landlord of his own tavern - the 'Cottage of Content' in this latter year, but all went awry within a year or two. His eldest daughter had an illegitimate child in 1834 when she was 19 years old. The child died, his son was again imprisoned, and Frosty lost his tavern. Frosty left for, or fled to, Manchester only to return to Liverpool later to die unnoticed, of liver disease in Liverpool Workhouse. His writings in the latter years of his life reflected not only the decline in his sport but also the decline and impoverishment of himself, family and friends. Some of his poems indicate his awareness of the unfairness of class and society in general while other poems refer to the perils of alcohol.

Frosty didn't deserve his ignominious end and his old friends would surely have written him a splendid obituary if they had been aware of it but the likely notice of his death, sent to London from the Workhouse, was returned unopened, and so no-one for a long time even knew of his demise. I suspect that Frosty had written this letter himself, to be posted to Bell's newspaper in the event of his death. Ironically, Frosty had written obituaries for several of his pugilistic friends.

He had lived long enough to see his daughter Jane marry in Liverpool but there is no evidence that he actually attended the wedding. His unmarried partner, and any children by her, seem to have abandoned him and returned to London. Because we do not know the surname of this partner she has proved untraceable so far, but for Frosty's two legitimate daughters, Jane and Elizabeth, I have managed to trace several hundred descendants, many of whom are alive today - mostly totally unaware of their ancestor and his celebrity. Some of those that I could track so far I have included in an appendix. Possibly a website could be constructed that would allow any of them tracing their genealogy to discover their link to Frosty-faced Fogo. Oddly, most of those descended from Jane *still* live in Liverpool whilst many of those descended from Elizabeth live in the Greater Manchester area.

The story isn't completely ended since more research might unearth copies of his 'lost' books of poems and there are still newspapers that haven't been consulted that might surface and contain poems or details of his life. In this regard I must thank Roger Hull of Liverpool Archives who so generously sent me scans of their collection of *Bethell's Sporting News* which contained new material about Frosty and also Tony Gee for his similar collection. My thanks go also to Frosty's descendants Pat Heery and Roy McGuire for their help and strong interest in their ancestor.

Life is a journey and unravelling the winding story of this fascinating ancestor has exposed the ingredients for a dramatic Victorian novel or play, worthy of the attention of a more competent writer.

Robert C. Senior  
Butleigh Court Tower, 2023

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