

John Edward BIGGS (1858-1887)

<i>1861 Census Victoria House Old Road, Gravesend, Kent, England</i>			
James BIGGS	Head	29yrs	b St Lukes, London
Commercial clerk to Royal Mail Steam Packet Co.			
Elizabeth BIGGS	Wife	29yrs	b Shoreditch, London
Elizabeth Mary BIGGS		8yrs	b Shoreditch, London
Anne Emily BIGGS		6yrs	b St Mary's Islington, London
James William BIGGS		5yrs	b St Mary's Islington, London
John Edward BIGGS		3yrs	b Northfleet, Kent
George Henry BIGGS		1yr	b Northfleet, Kent
<i>1871 Census Park House School Milton Rd 6 Park Place, Gravesend, Kent</i>			
Edwin SAVAGE	Head	32yrs	Schoolmaster
John E. BIGGS	Pupil	13yrs	Scholar
George H. BIGGS	Pupil	11yrs	Scholar
<i>1881 Census 7 Beaumont Road, Islington East, London</i>			
James BIGGS	Head	49yrs	Managing Clerk Steam Packet Company
Elizabeth BIGGS	Wife	49yrs	
James W. BIGGS	Son	24yrs	Engineering draughtsman [unmarried]
John E. BIGGS	Son	23yrs	Commercial clerk [unmarried]
George H. BIGGS	Son	21yrs	Bankers clerk [unmarried]
Ellen J. BIGGS	Dau	19yrs	
Alice E. BIGGS	Dau	17yrs	

Liverpool Mercury 19 Aug 1885 The Congo

The fact that the Baptist Foreign Missionary Society recently lost by death two of its agents within a few weeks of their arrival at their post of duty on the banks of the Congo River lent additional interest to the meeting which took place last evening in the Baptist Chapel, Myrtle-street, to bid farewell to five new missionaries who embark today bound for the Congo. There was a large audience. The Rev. Hugh Stowell Brown occupied the chair, and there were also on the platform the Rev T. J. Comber (of the Congo Mission, who has been on a leave of absence) and the five new missionaries – Messrs J. E. Biggs (of Upper Holloway), Percy Comber and P. Davies, B.A. (both of Regent's Park College), John Maynard (the Pastor's College), and Michael Richards (of Forest-gate). Mr A. H. Baynes (the secretary of the missionary society) having addressed the meeting, Mr Comber, to whom was accorded a hearty reception, thanked them for their kindly expression of sympathy. It was not a pleasant thing, he felt, to leave England – to leave friends to whom he was attached to go and live in a distant country. Though there were some people who desired to be cosmopolitan, he had never desired to be a citizen of the world. He loved England, but his work had called him elsewhere. He did not like Africa as much as he did England, nor Africans as much as the people of this country; but he knew that his work lay in Africa, and he would no exchange it for any other. While on his journey to England he had hoped that he would have had abundant leisure, but the interest he had found everywhere manifested in the Congo mission had compelled him to make a sacrifice of his own time, and give all the information about the missionary enterprise in his power. He was returning now without that wished-for rest, but, he was thankful to say, in good health. The deep interest taken in England in the mission of the Congo River was such as to give him and his co-workers every encouragement. He had, during his sojourn in England, heard a faint whisper – so faint that those who uttered it seemed half-ashamed of their suggestion – that after the recent losses the mission on the Congo should be given up. This Mr Comber said was not the opinion of the missionaries in Africa, and he knew that when his colleagues in that country heard of the assistance they were about to receive they would exult. When, one Christmas, he heard of the batch of comrades about to leave England, he was nearly prostrated with the joyful news for two or three days. Now, in leaving these shores he had no presentiment of evil. They started for Africa ready for whatever might come, and if they should be struck down at their post of duty they should feel the honour which had been cast upon them in being permitted to die in so noble a cause. Addresses were afterwards delivered by each of the missionaries, and at the close a collection was made towards defraying the cost of their outfit, which amounts to about £120 for each missionary – The Chairman said that there was a lady present, who was about to sail for the Congo to be married to one of the missionaries there. He had much pleasure in wishing her a long and happy life. The missionaries depart by the British and African steamer Lualaba today (Wednesday), the tender for which leaves the Prince's Landing-stage at noon.

Daily News 29 Oct 1887 Death of another Congo Missionary

News has just come to hand of the death of Mr J. E. Biggs, a Baptist missionary on the Congo, and the son of Mr J. Biggs, of Orpington. Mr Biggs died on August 26 last from bilious intermittent fever, at Kinshasa, Stanley Pool. Dr Sims, of the American Baptist Missionary Union, attended the deceased during his illness, and reports that the fever commenced in the usual way on August 17, when the temperature of the blood marked 105.4 degrees. Mr Biggs was a colleague of the Rev T. J. Comber, and only recently he wrote to the secretary of the mission a very hopeful letter. The committee of the Baptist Missionary Society are engaged in making the most careful inquiries and investigations as to the best course of treatment to be adopted in Congo fever cases, and special medical instructions have been despatched to the missionaries. Further medical representatives will, it is hoped, be shortly secured and sent out.

The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post 16 Jan 1888 The Congo Martyrs of 1887

Last evening the Rev G. D. Evans preached a sermon upon the above subject at Old King Street Chapel, taking for his text the words in Hebrew 11th chap., 13th verse – “These all died in faith.” He said – The history of the church is to be read in the light of funeral pyres. This is universally true of missionary enterprise. The essence of the missionary spirit is self sacrifice. The church weeps over the graves of the fallen, but she must never forget that they gave themselves up as ready to live or die for Christ. The men who went to the Congo went knowing that it was impossible to predict what kind of constitution would stand the climate of the deadly land upon its banks. One after another had fallen, but still they pressed on. The road was tracked with blood, but they moved along, heroes with God’s Word in their lips and the love of Christ in their hearts. They had no desire to die, but rather to fight a stern battle for life, but at the same time they murmured not when God called them. I know of no chapter in modern missions more worthy of the church of the New Testament than the last. At the commencement of last year there was great joy that for 12 months none of the Congo staff had succumbed. This joy soon gave place to sorrow as blow after blow fell upon our hearts. The mails were like Job’s messengers, and before the year closed the names of five brethren and one sister were inscribed upon the death rolls. Mr Evans then briefly sketched the lives of James Henry Shindler and Frank C. Darling, who died at Underhill within five minutes of each other; Martha Spearing, Thomas J. Comber, Henry George Whitley, and John Edward Biggs. Thus, said the preacher, in briefest fashion we have recalled the facts, and, sorrowful, gloomy facts in the light of weeping friends, a dismembered mission, and purposes broken off. Their sun went down while it was yet day. But is it all gloom? No. Do these calamities prove that God is angry with us? No. Do they tell us that we have mistaken our Lord’s commission? Is Africa to be left out of His command “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature?” No. “These all died in faith.” They believed that Africa would be regenerated partly, it might be, through their death, and that in the end her tawny sons would cast their crowns at the Redeemer’s feet. In the light of these sad losses what about the future of this work? Shall we renounce it? It is easy for us to say no, while we sit at ease by our firesides or in our sanctuaries, looking on from far, and contributing our poor mites to the great work. We have not been called to die on the lonely field. The question is not to be settled by those who are at home. What do they say out there? What did Comber say, knowing all the risks of the enterprise? Over his brother’s grave he wrote, “This new loss will not keep back any brethren worthy of the work who think of consecrating themselves to it. Some of us, had we ten lives, would cheerfully lay them all down at our Master’s feet for work in Africa.” That estimate of the value of the work must decide the question. There they realise the vastness of the possible issues, as well as the greatness of the dangers. Every voice out there says, no. We by their sacrifice, are bound ourselves to offer sacrifices, and also to do our best to secure our brethren, as far as possible, from the perils to which they are exposed in the work given to them by our Lord. May we be faithful as they have been, “even unto death.” There is one lesson more. They all began work for Christ when very young. Shindler was 15, Darling 19, Comber and Biggs but lads, Whitley only 12, Miss Spearing but a girl when baptised. They were children in our Sabbath schools, and trained in Godly homes. Teachers and parents’ prayers helped to mould their characters. This early consecration was the foundation of their missionary enthusiasm, and in this we want the young to follow them. We can point to no nobler examples except to Him in whose footsteps they were proud to follow.