

## **Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig OSANG**

Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig OSANG was born in 1855 in the small town of Ilsenburg, in the independent Earldom of Stolberg, now part of the German State of Saxony-Anhalt. Although he was always known as Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig (FWL) in England, he was baptised as Friedrich Ludwig Wilhelm.

His early life was difficult. His mother (Johanne Christiane Friederike) died in 1857 when he was three years old, and his father remarried. Something happened to his father's shoe and boot-making business, because by 1860 the family were living in poverty. His father (Carl August) died in 1863 when FWL was eight, leaving the family reliant on poor relief.

Of the ten children born to his father, only four survived to adulthood – FWL and one elder sister and two elder brothers. By the age of eighteen, FWL had become an apprentice shoemaker, but (perhaps because of his impoverished childhood) he was declared permanently unfit for military service.

It is not quite clear how and why he emigrated to England. It is thought that he left with a brother to seek his fortune. If this is so, it is likely to be his eldest brother Johann Heinrich who was nine years older than FWL. It is also thought that he first went to Paris to 'learn his trade'. This is quite possible, as at that time Paris and London were the centre of shoe-making fashion.

In 1885 he married Karoline SCHWARZ in London. Very little is known about Karoline, other than that her father was Friedrich and was a bricklayer. FWL and Karoline lived in a house in Wardour Street, Soho where several of their children were born.

FWL set up in business with Henry CIRIAX (another German National) as Osang & Ciriak, but the business failed in 1886. He then moved to a shoe-making shop in Wardour Street, where he lived with Karoline and his five children (one daughter and four sons) until Karoline died in 1898. He then married Marie Elise Hermena KOHLMAYER, with whom he had six children (four daughters and two sons).

Of his eleven children, all survived to adulthood except one daughter (Maria Charlotte) who died aged fourteen.

The First World War brought major changes. FWL was interned firstly at Alexandra Palace in London, and then at Knockaloe on the Isle of Man. His family moved to a shoe-making shop in Notting Hill Gate, London. FWL returned to this shop after the end of the war, where he died in 1921, aged sixty five.