

The Thompson family of Barby

Mary Emma Thompson married Arthur William Lane in the parish church of Preston Capes, Northamptonshire in 1883. Arthur was a bank clerk at the time of their marriage (later he was manager of a branch of the Westminster Bank) and was living in Twickenham, Middlesex. Their children were Evelyn, Hilda, Hubert, Harold and Gerald.

Mary was not born in Preston Capes but in Stepney in 1857. Her parents, Samuel Thompson (b. 1811) and Betsey Stratford (b. 1821) retired to Preston Capes in 1871 to become farmers and lived in Little Preston House, Little Preston, a hamlet close to the village. Samuel died of heart disease in 13.2.1879 and Betsey carried on farming until the late 1880s when she went to live with her only surviving son, James Benjamin, in Willesden, and died there in 1896. Samuel, Betsey and 2 sons who predeceased Betsey are buried in the same grave in the churchyard of Preston Capes parish church. James Benjamin worked as a railway clerk with LMR. He married a year after Betsey's death but he and Ada did not have children so he was the end of this line of Thompsons.

Betsey was born in Preston Capes where 3 generations of the Stratford family had lived before her. The first Stratford recorded in Preston Capes was Benjamin who moved to the village from nearby Fawsley in 1778 and worked as a grazier. His son, also Benjamin (Betsey's grandfather), married Mary Chamberlain in 1780. The Chamberlains go back even further in the village : the earliest one recorded on the village genealogical database was John, a husbandman in 1610. He was Betsey's 6xgreat grandfather. (village website: www.prestoncap.es.org.uk).

In the census records of 1841 to 1871 we find Samuel and Betsey living in Stepney with Samuel's occupation given as Customs Officer so he was presumably working at the London Docks. They had 6 children, including Mary Emma, born between 1846 and 1859.

For some time we could get no further with Samuel's ancestry since we could not find a record of his baptism. On the census returns his place of birth is given as Northampton but that could be taken to mean Northamptonshire. Then the wife of my third cousin Nic Slocum, Wendy, obtained a copy of Samuel and Betsey's marriage certificate which held a few surprises. First, we had not been aware that Samuel was a widower when he married Betsey. He married his first wife, Sarah Raban, a baker's daughter from Olney in Buckinghamshire 31.1.1844 in Olney Parish Church. Their daughter, Juliet Rebecca, was born in Tower Hamlets in 1845 and perhaps Sarah died in childbirth. She was only 19 when Juliet was born.

The second surprise was that Samuel and Betsey's marriage took place in the tiny village of Brockhall near Weedon in January 1951 and not in her home village of Preston Capes. We knew she had left Preston Capes before the 1841 census but had not been able to find her elsewhere until 1851 when she was living in Stepney. In the marriage certificate Betsey's occupation is given as servant. She may have been working in the Hall at Brockhall which was owned by the Thornton family (now developed into smart flats). From the certificate we found that Samuel's father was called Joseph and his occupation is given as merchant. One of the witnesses was a James Claridge and he was found on the 1851 census where he is listed as a Master Cooper living in Daventry. His mother-in-law, Rebecca Thompson, was living with him and his family and she is described as the widow of a coal merchant and her place of birth is given as Kilsby, Northants. James Claridge's wife Mary Ann was conveniently visiting her brother William in Birmingham at the time of the census. So we had now found both Samuel's parents and a brother and a sister.

We then started to trace Rebecca Thompson's ancestry. Her date of birth (1791) coincides with the birth of a Rebecca Gardner in Kilsby and a marriage is recorded on 8.1.1799 in the nearby village of Barby between Joseph Thompson, resident of Barby, and Rebecca Gardner. The Gardners can be traced back to at least the 16th century in Kilsby and Guilsborough, the earliest recorded by another of his descendants was William Gardyner of Gyldesburgh, a husbandman who died in 1536.

Rebecca's father, John Gardner (1728 - 1791) married Mary Satchell (1746 - 1823) originally from nearby Swinford, just over the county border in Leicestershire, in 1764. Rebecca was the fourth of thirteen children. The occupations of her brothers (those who lived after the first census record in 1841) were varied: one a grazier, one an agricultural labourer and two rather wealthier ones, Aaron with independent means and William who started as a baker, then progressed to being a farmer of 16 acres and then 47 acres.

Mary Satchell's parents, William (d.1769), a farmer, and Rebekah (d.1770) moved from Swinford to Kilsby sometime between Mary's birth and the birth of their last child, Catherine, in 1754. In William's will he bequeaths his "land and appurtances" in Swinford to his children. The parish records for Swinford are difficult to read having been attacked by damp and mice! Rebekah's maiden name was Wood and there are 2 gravestones (made of slate = wealthy family!) in the Swinford Churchyard of William Wood (1662 - 1737) and Rebekah his wife (1684 - 1747). These were Rebekah's parents. The Woods were farmers and owned land in Swinford and in

Kingsthorpe, Northamptonshire. A researcher called Norman Tyldesley working in the 1960s did some very detailed research into the Wood family. This can be found on sharehistory.org entitled Wood of Swinford. He traced the Wood family back to the nearby village of Lilbourne. The earliest parish register there which starts in 1573 records numerous Woods indicating that the family had been settled there for some time. Mary Satchell's 4xgreat grandfather was Richard Wood, probably born about 1520 and who died in 1577. He owned land in Lilbourne, according to his Will proved in Northampton

Now to the Thompsons: after a false trail following the wrong Joseph Thompson, we think we have found the right one. He was baptised on 7.9.1775 in Barby, Northamptonshire to Samuel Thompson and his wife, Ann, nee Abott. Unfortunately the parish records for Barby before 1750 have been lost. The Bishop's transcripts go back to 1700 but do not record the Christian names of the parents so we can't be sure about Samuel's or Ann's parents or grandparents. There is a birth of a Samuel Thompson recorded in 1715 who might have been the father of Samuel (b. 1739). The earliest record of a Thompson in Barby that we have found is for an Edward Thompson who appears with 3 hearths in the Hearth Tax in 1664. There was a John Abott living in Barby in 1598 whose will is in the National Archives so they were both relatively well-to-do families in the village.

Joseph had three brothers and two sisters who survived infancy. Two brothers moved from Barby to Long Buckby. John moved sometime between 1792 and 1798 and became a coal dealer and Nathan moved between 1805 and 1807 and worked as a basketmaker. Edward, the eldest son, may also have moved to Long Buckby. There is no record of a burial of him or his wife, however, either in Barby or Long Buckby. His children were born in Barby but his grandchildren by his only son were all born in Long Buckby. I guess that their father must have been a younger son or of a different family from the land-owning branch and therefore did not inherit land in Barby.

This family move to Long Buckby coincides with the building of the Oxford Canal which started in 1769 with the intention of linking the industrial Midlands and the coalfield of North Warwickshire to London via the Thames. It was completed in 1790 and for a short while was one of the most important and profitable transport links in Britain. The faster route - the Grand Union - was completed in 1805. Long Buckby is situated close to the junction of the Oxford canal and the Leicester arm of the Grand Union. Of Joseph's male nephews, three were coal dealers/merchants, one was a journeyman butcher, one was a basket maker (all in Long Buckby) and one nephew returned to Barby and the land working as a shepherd. The next generation of Long Buckby Thompsons (of which there were many) had varied occupations in the town or in nearby Long Buckby Wharf. There were railway porters, innkeepers, boatmen, boat owners,

brickmakers, a blacksmith and one canal boat captain ("The Thomas" 31 tons). By 1901 most of them had moved to pastures new and there were only about four families of Thompsons left in Long Buckby.

Joseph and Rebecca were living in Weedon in 1799 and their first son, John, was baptised in the parish church. I can find no further record of John and assume that he died young. Both Mary Ann (b 1801) and Joseph (b 1804) were born in Weedon according to census returns but there is no record of their baptism there.

Starting in 1803, an enormous Ordnance depot was built in Weedon for arms, ammunition and troops to supply the war against Napoleon. There would have been a huge demand for coal as the village population increased from 500 to 2000. An ideal business opportunity for a coal merchant!

Between 1804 and 1809, Joseph and family may have been living in Northampton. I am fairly certain that William and Samuel were born there but again, I have not been able to find any record of baptism. Mary Ann married James Claridge in All Saints (the town parish church) and later, William probably also got married there. In the parish records the two of them are both said to be "of this parish". If the family lived here this might explain why Samuel became a Customs officer because there is an office of Customs and Excise in the town. (I still have to visit National Archives to see if I can find any details of his career).

In 1841 we find Joseph and Rebecca living in Great King Street, Birmingham in the parish of St. George and living on "Independent means". Joseph died 24.5.1846 at the age of 71 of heart disease and anasarca, a type of oedema and William was "in attendance". At the time of his death Joseph (presumably with Rebecca) was living at 3 Henrietta Street in the parish of St. Paul, Birmingham. He was buried at Key Hill Cemetery in the Jewellery Quarter of Birmingham. This was a cemetery for non-conformists and the minister who officiated at Joseph's burial was a Peter Sibree, described in a census as a "gospel independent minister". So Joseph became a non-conformist sometime after 1799. This might explain why I have not been able to find baptism records for the 4 younger children

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