RINGSTEAD PEOPLE 2

More Lives of Nineteenth Century People

From a Northamptonshire Village

David Ball

Ringstead

People 2

By

David Ball

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Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Chapter One **The Drink Curse**. John T. Collett

Chapter Two **Sins of the Father?** William Cobley and son

Chapter Three **Greater Love Hath No Man.** John William Sawford

Chapter Four **Sheep Lost and Found.** Aaron and James Abbott

Chapter Five **Village Constables.** John Pengilly, Henry Packer etc.

Chapter Six **The Staff of Life.** Mary Betts, Thomas Lee, etc.

Chapter Seven **Passing Strangers.** Tabitha Boswell and others.

Chapter Eight **Gypsies? A Postscript.** Martha Jane Beeby (Gunn)

Chapter Nine **Workhouse Lives.** Henry Atley. Louisa Tomlin (nee Cobley) and others

Chapter Ten **The Cycling Revolution.** Ernest Cottingham, Vinnie Warren and others

Chapter Eleven **Vicars and Curates.** Isaac Gaskarth, Charles Proby and others

Chapter Twelve **Hard as Iron**. William, Samuel and Joseph Mayes.

Chapter Thirteen **End of an Era?**

Appendix **Amendments and Additions to *Ringstead People.***

Front cover shows a view from near the path to Mallows Cotton across to the station and Great Addington Church. George Clarke (c1847). With the kind permission of the Northamptonshire Record Office. Back cover shows a similar view in 2013 taken by the author.

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Once again I am indebted to many people for their help and support in writing these short biographies. Janice and Philip Morris, Vivienne Marshall and Agnes Burton have continued with their online support. The staff of Northamptonshire Record Office have always been helpful and understanding. I also must record my indebtedness to the excellent Rushden Heritage website and especially to Kay Collins.

A number of websites have kindly allowed me to use photographs and I have thanked them in the references at the end of each chapter. Almost without exception I have been met with kindness and a willingness to help.

I would like to thank my wife, Betty for her patience and for her obsession with patchwork which has enabled her to understand my own obsession with this project.

David Ball

References

I have given my main references at the end of each chapter for people who wish to follow up anything with their own research. I have omitted certain references which underpin all the chapters. These are the Parish Registers of Ringstead and the neighbouring parishes. These have been viewed mainly at the Northampton Record Office, (NRO), but I have also used the transcriptions on the Rushden Heritage website. I have also used the Censuses from 1841 – 1911 on Ancestry.co.uk and the 1911 Census on FindMyPast.co.uk, as well as at NRO and more recently on the Rushden site. Every month more is becoming available on line but Record Offices are still the most valuable repositories of our past. Without them many ordinary lives would disappear forever.

Website

This is likely to be my last book on Ringstead and at some stage I will close down my website. It has proved a wonderful way of posting my draft stories and sometimes to my delight people write to me to amend or add to the biographies. I would like to thank my son Tom for setting up the website **www.ringsteadpeople.com** on which these stories originally appeared and without which I probably would never have got started.

Introduction

My hope from the start was that I could help to bring to life the lives of the ordinary people of the village of Ringstead. Of course the sources are few and we rarely can see the personal lives in the way that the upper classes are recorded. If there seems more than an average amount of criminality it is because the newspapers usually only seemed aware of ordinary people when the law became involved. The other surprise that the two books have given me is the large number of villagers who disappear only to appear in distant corners of England or the Empire. We see in these stories that the villagers had an independence of spirit and an unwillingness to kowtow to anyone. Those who came from outside, the schoolmasters, constables and vicars, to bring order and respectfulness to the inhabitants were often exasperated and bewildered by them.

David Ball

October 2013

[Note a 'c' before a date in the text is short for circa meaning 'about' or 'approximately'.

For younger readers who did not grow up with red exercise book covers full of archaic distances, weights and measures, here are a few that are mentioned in the text. It is important to remember that before the various Acts of Parliament in the Nineteenth Century not only time but many measurements differed across the country.

12d. (old pence) =1s. (shilling: now 5 pence): 20 shillings = £1 (or sometimes 1L).

16 oz. (ounces) = 1 lb. (pound - 0.454 kg): 14 lbs. = 1 st. (stone); 8 stone = 1 cwt (hundredweight): 20 cwt = 1 ton. (1.016 tonne)

12" or in. (inches) = 1 ft. (foot: 30.48 cm): 3 ft = 1 yd (yard): 1760 yards = 1 mile. Also 1 rod, pole or perch = 5½ yards and 220 yards = 1 furlong.

4 roods = 1 acre (4840 square yards). It is easy to confuse rods and roods and the latter often varied from county to county.

Chapter One

The Drink Curse

John Thomas Collett

I have tried, in these biographies, to tell the stories of ordinary men and women: the labourers, the shoemakers, the teachers and the shopkeepers. Occasionally, however, the story of someone whose stay in the village was brief is difficult to ignore. It may be a teacher like Albert Crew or a thief like John Hardy. Sometimes also it is the lure of the chase that leads us on: the pleasure of reconstructing an extraordinary life hidden by time and perhaps by deliberate red herrings.

I first came across J. T. Collett PhD when I read in the *Wellingborough News* of a talk he had given on his, 'Reminiscences of the Drink Curse', at the Ringstead Temperance Hall on Monday 4th February 1882. The article was written for those who would have known of the facts of his time in Ringstead so, annoyingly, much was left unsaid.

> *The announcement of Mr. Collett's visit to Ringstead, as might be expected, drew a large number of people to the Temperance Hall. Some were attracted thither by curiosity, others perhaps expected to hear something novel, and may came to hear a man who about seven years ago made no small commotion in the village, and championed the people's cause in parish matters*

Why, 'expected'? Exactly what the commotion was is never stated but those present certainly gave him a very enthusiastic welcome. He tells of his problems which would have been known to his audience, but not to us.

> *He expressed the great pleasure it gave him to be once more in Ringstead. It was six and a half years since he left the village. During that time life had passed roughly with him, and some of the angles in life had been rudely rubbed off, but notwithstanding all the vicissitudes of life he dared to come to Ringstead, where (dare he say it) he was once the Baptist Minister. He should ever cherish that thought. Well, he still had the same love for freedom and free thought as then. Though this might bring crosses and rebuffs, he and they should have a purpose true and dare to defend it. He advocated freedom of thought and freedom of speech* to *his opponents as well as to himself.*

We see a 'Radical' who would have been much appreciated by a large section of the villagers. He went on to talk of the dangers of drink: how it shortened lives, destroyed careers, blunted the affections and impaired the memory. He admits that he had once drunk intoxicating drinks and could say, 'from personal experience that the drink was an evil'. He finished by describing:

> *. . . in graphic terms his experience of prison life while incarcerated in Leicester gaol, a victim of an unjust, vindictive and scandalous prosecution.*

The *Ringstead Particular Baptist Church Book* confirms part of the story but it gives few other details. It tells us:

The church was without a minister from August 1874 to the first Sabbath of 1875. When the church engaged the Reverend J T Collett for 12 months, who commenced his engagement on the first Sunday of November

He was proposed for membership of Ringstead Baptist Church and accepted on December 26th 1875 on a 'profession of faith'. This seems to imply that they were concerned about his Particular Baptist Minister credentials.

Where did this J. T. Collett come from? A John Thomas Collet, son of William and Elizabeth, was born on the 6th November 1846 and baptised on December 26th 1847 at St Mary's Church in Guyhirn. Unfortunately this child was buried the following April aged just 17 months. The cause of death was diarrhoea, perhaps due to the lack of clean drinking water in the fens. Another son was born on 30th December 1848 and also baptised John Thomas on March 9th 1849. The first child had been baptised at the parish church but our John Thomas Collett received a Primitive Methodist baptism and we know that a Primitive Methodist chapel had opened in the adjacent hamlet of Tholomas Drove in 1845.

The parents of John were William and Elizabeth Collett. William is something of a mystery, giving a number of different birth places in the Census returns. We do know, from his marriage certificate, that he was the son of James Collett and was probably born somewhere south of Oxford on the Berkshire, Oxfordshire border. His wife had been born Elizabeth Pywell in Warmington Northamptonshire.

William was a cordwainer or shoemaker and we can only surmise as to what brought him to Guyhirn. In 1841 he was still single and living with shoemaker Charles Kemp and his family in Parsons Drove, very near to Guyhirn. He married Elizabeth at Warmington on May 7th 1844 in his wife's home village. She was a servant at the time of their marriage so perhaps she had been working In the Guyhirn area.

Guyhirn is a village near Wisbech, which is strung along what was once the main road from Peterborough to the port of Wisbech. It had followed the course of the north bank of the Nene which had been canalised and the high banks erected to protect the lands from the salt water of the tide overflowing as it met the river water. All around were the flat silt fens on which the agricultural wealth of the area was built.

The 1851 Census for Guyhirn shows this dependence of the village on farming for its wealth. There were some on parish relief and agricultural labourers but there were many farmers. We see, among them, millwrights and wheelwrights, brickmakers and bricklayers, carpenters and blacksmiths. There are also two shoemakers, both employing men, and there is William Collet, cordwainer. It seems likely that they were all making boots and shoes for the farmers and the stout boots which they and the farmworkers would have needed in the damp fields of the fens.

The Fens had a history of religious dissent and education. In 1879, William had returned to Guyhirn and was living in Tholomas Drove, a hamlet on the road to Wisbech St Mary. There had been a free school there since 1726, provided by the will of a local Quaker and we also know of other schools, day and Sunday, provided by the various churches. It would seem to have been an unusually good place for a young boy to get at least some schooling.

There had been for centuries little Church of England presence in the parish and this continued until 1871. The Reverend William Carpenter writing of this time before he came states:

> *Nothing but dame schools existed in the village and the education of the young has been so neglected that many of the inhabitants cannot even read. . .*

The latter statement would have been true of many English parishes and there may be some sectarian bias here. In Guyhirn there was, and still is, an austere little church built as a puritan chapel but finished in 1660 just when Cromwell's Commonwealth gave way to the Anglican kingdom of Charles II. It became the parish chapel of ease for the Guyhirn graveyard and it was in this mixed middle ground that John tried to set his religious life.

By 1854, when their daughter Phoebe was born, William and Elizabeth had moved to the different, although essentially still rural, world of Aston near in Birmingham. He continued with his trade of bootmaker, so perhaps the demand for boots and shoes in Wisbech was being affected by the general depression in farming, together with competition from the new factories. The couple suffered a series of tragedies as child after child was born and died in early infancy. It was not until 1860, when James George Collett was born, that John had a sibling who survived the first few years of life. These two brothers both became pastors in non-conformist churches but their careers could not have been more different.

Perhaps surprisingly, Wisbech once had a Baptist College, the Theological Academy of the General Baptists of the New Connexion, which had transferred in 1813 from the Mile End Road in London. John Collett did not go there but perhaps it helped shape his career thoughts for, by 1871, we find him at the English Baptist College in Bristol.

Its Principal was Frederick William Gotch, who was descended from a well-known family from Kettering in Northamptonshire. Gotch was a progressive man who had a great interest in the new science. It would seem the sort of forward-thinking, broad, broad college that would have suited John but we know from the Bristol Baptist College alumni files that:

> *J. T. Collett entered College in 1870 from Ely. Charges had been laid against this student at the start of the 1871 session. He had to leave.*

In those years after he was thrown out of the Baptist College, much seems to have happened to John. It must have been during this time, if at all, that he gained an M.A., a Ph.D. and the right to be called 'Reverend'. It appears that, in 1872, he married Hannah and moved to London, where his first child, John, was born. Then, on 25th October 1873, at the Free Church, Princes Risborough, in Buckinghamshire, a 'Rev. J. T. Collett' officiated at the wedding of Mr. Thomas Gilks and Miss Elizabeth Aldridge. By 4th July 1874 he was a minister at Christ Church, a Unitarian church in Devonport when his second son, George, was born. Within the next eighteen months James, his youngest child was also born there.

The first mention of him that I have found is in *the Northampton Mercury* of 25th December 1875 which reported that he had spoken at a meeting held at the Raunds Wesleyan Chapel

Why he left his post in Devonport we do not know but the move to Ringstead was not an obvious one. The Unitarians and Particular Baptists had a number of important theological differences. Nor do we do know how much of his background John revealed to those interviewing him at Ringstead. All we can say is that there could have been a number of reasons why the church members had concerns when appointing him. His father being a bootmaker might have been an advantage at his interview and a number of the schoolmasters appointed to the National School also came from shoemaking backgrounds.

We do get a hint of how John had 'championed the people's cause in Parish matters', that he referred to when he returned to the village in 1882, In the Vestry Minutes for 1876, signed by Edward Sandford, the Vicar, it states:

> *At the Easter Meeting held in the School on April 21 1876 Mr. Thomas Peach was nominated churchwarden by the Vicar and Dr. Collet for the parish by the parishioners.*

The Vestry Committee was the precursor of the Parish Council and was naturally dominated by the local church and its supporters. John seems to have been something of a rabble-rouser but he did try to give the ordinary villagers (and the Nonconformists) a voice on this committee. It is not commented on but we can imagine that there was a great deal of 'commotion' and anger at his deliberate intrusion into this important local meeting. It seems to have marked the start of a campaign by the more radical parts of the community to have a say in local politics.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the more conservative of the Ringstead Particular Church members did not take to John and, a few months later, in September 1876 it was decided not to renew his engagement. One surprising reason given was that he was joining the Catholic Church and indeed, in October 1876 it was proposed that Dr Collett's name be erased from the Church Book as he had joined the Catholic Church. An 1885 book 'listing about four thousand Protestants who have recently become Roman Catholics' does include:

> Rev. *D. J. T. Collett, formerly a Baptist minister.*

If this is our J. T. Collett then the Catholic Church is just one of a number of churches that he seems to have belonged to concurrently, as we shall see.

After Collett left Ringstead, the first that we hear of him is in a letter sent to the Birmingham Daily Post on 14th February 1880. (His name is variously spelt with and without an 'e'.)

> ***A 'FEVER FONT'***
>
> *Sir, - Will you permit me, through the medium of your columns to draw the attention of the sanitary authorities of this district to the existence of a pool, having a circumference of about fifty yards and situated within six yards of the back gate of my residence, and two yards from a street along which about 150 workpeople pass daily to their employ? The pool is filled with stagnant water and is the receptacle for dead dogs, cats &c.; also the refuse of middens in the locality. I saw two cartloads emptied into it on Wednesday morning last, being the third lot within the last month.*
>
> *As a result of the rising of the poisonous gases from this font of disease I have my children ill with scarlet fever. Now, I am told to remove from my house, and thus shun the evil; but, sir there are other houses in the locality, ten being in the row in which I live. If this pool is allowed to remain and I go, someone else may enter my house and immediately have their children taken with fever, to say nothing of the children of other residents, some of whom have been and are suffering.*
>
> *I am yours &c*.
>
> *J. T. COLLETTE, Ph. D.*
>
> *Watt Street, Warwick Road, Greet, Feb. 14.*

We see that he was still a campaigner and had a journalist's eye for giving the details. We also see that he had a family and was living in poor conditions.

Greet was on the southern outskirts of Birmingham. It was a small rural community, which, like many others suddenly urbanised in the 1870s with rows of terraces being built to house the workers, mainly for the local BSA Small Arms Factory. The sort of problem that 'J. T. Collette' complains of was the almost inevitable result.

By October of that year John had moved some twenty-five miles eastward to Nuneaton. 'J.T.' successfully sued an Oxfordshire clergyman for 10s 6d for a sermon he had written for him. He describes himself as Master of Arts and author. A letter from him to the *Birmingham Daily News* explains the situation more clearly and also reveals a little of his gathering problems and aspirations.

> *. . . I am a Nonconformist minister (Congregationalist) without charge and the sermons I supply to Church clergymen are those preached by myself, containing Nonconformist theology. You would have known this, only I happen to be an advanced Liberal and that is the greatest sin a man can commit in Nuneaton and, therefore, all people in this place look upon me as a 'dangerous' man, who would corrupt the minds of the youth of the town with 'Radical' principles.*

J.T. appears to be a Congregationalist Minister without a congregation. In light of this letter it is no surprise that, when we next encounter him, he had moved again, to 48 Southampton Street in Leicester. The 1881 Census, taken on the 3rd April, lists him as John Collett, aged 31 and a journalist. With him are his wife Hannah, aged 32 and their children John, aged nine born in London, George aged six and James aged five both born in Plymouth in Devon. The birth places of John and Hannah are 'Not Known'. Now this could be an honest response by the head of the household, in their absence, or it could be John trying to leave his history behind. In this he follows his father's example who gave his place of birth as Auram in Oxfordshire in 1851, Appleford in Berkshire in 1861 and, finally, Sutton (Courtenay) in Berkshire ten years later. The latter two places at least exist but is difficult to guess what village 'Auram' might be. It was only John's mother's consistency of birthplace, Warmington in Northamptonshire, which confirms that we have the right family each time.

John and his family are lodging with Hannah Forehead, a widow, and her children. He had probably come to Leicester to obtain work. We know that he managed to get a temporary position with the *Leicester Newspaper Company* as a 'Newspaper Canvasser', selling advertising to local businesses. Unfortunately, our knowledge comes from the newspaper reports of his trial for embezzlement from the company, in the months following his employment in March or early April of 1881. One newspaper report also confirms that he was formerly a Unitarian Minister at Devonport, which is part of Plymouth, where, in the 1881 Census, the youngest two children were said to have been born.

On Thursday 1st September 1881 a John Thomas Collett of 48 Southampton Street came before the Leicester Borough Police Court. The charge was that, although he did not have authority to collect accounts he had done so, getting two cheques made out in his name. These cheques had not been paid into the company account. One was for £9 10s and the other for £6 6s. One witness told the court that he had asked for this under the pretext that he received 5% commission on all orders that he personally took in. In spite of his previous 'excellent character' and 'testimonials from persons of the highest standing', he was only given bail 'of £80 and two sureties of £40 each. It is unlikely that he would have been able to find this money so probably remained in gaol. He was committed to trial

at the next Quarter Sessions and at the Leicester Borough Sessions on Wednesday 19th October 1881 he was sentenced to 12months hard labour.

We know a great deal about his time in Leicester Gaol because he wrote a book entitled *Prison Reminiscences of the Drink Curse* which was published in 1883 by Marshall Brothers of London, although it was printed in Leicester. It ran to 112 pages and was obviously the basis of the Temperance speech that he gave in Ringstead in the February of that year.

John Thomas Collett (The frontispiece: from Prison Reminiscences of the Drink Curse)

Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library 1883.8.227

For once we have absolute proof that he did indeed write a book for a few copies still exist. There is one in the 'Rare Books' department of Cambridge University Library. It is a small fragile paperback about 8 inches by 5 inches with a pale grey cover. John might derive some satisfaction at the care with which it is now handled, and the company that it keeps. We learn that the author, J. T. Collett, Ph.D. F.R.A.S. has also written, '*The Shades of Hades, Why I am a Liberal* and *Is Vaccination a*

Preventative against Disease, etc. etc'. It is the second edition so we must assume that it has had some success although John comments wryly on this at later court case. The book's main purpose is to show that alcohol is the major reason for crime. Today, we would, perhaps, give drugs a similar prominence. He gives figures to prove his case:

> *In the particular prison in which I was engaged* ***twenty-five hundred prisoners*** *entered during the year, and all with the exception of* ***seventeen*** *were victims of 'the drink', and its curse was manifest upon them.*

John worked as a librarian while in the prison and in this way saw many of the prisoners and he recounts some of their lives. He tells us that the real rogues easily coped with prison life and even quite enjoyed it. For other men, however, who had made one mistake it could be a bitter experience. He did not have to step outside his cell to find a prisoner to illustrate this kind of man. He reveals his own sad case when he writes:

> *I shall never forget a prisoner of the latter kind who had held the position of a Christian Minister and had fallen through drink, having a wife and three children whom he dearly loved. One night he had a dream that troubled him greatly, which was to the following effect. He dreamed that he saw his wife and three boys in the corner of the cell, all looking lean and hungry and weeping bitterly. For a moment neither spoke, but they looked at him and he at them. At last he thought his wife cried, 'Dear Tom, what shall I do with these three boys? And then each boy addressed him, saying 'Papa, I am so hungry, do give me something to eat. The effect of the dream upon the prisoner was manifest; all that he would say for days after, when spoken to upon any subject, was 'oh! my dear, dear family. God help them; what a devil I have been'. But the most remarkable thing in connection with the circumstance was on the very day he dreamed the above, his wife and family were compelled to enter the parish union and he in ignorance of the fact.*

John talks about the chaplains, the officers, the punishments, the food and the prisoners. He shows up some of the failings of the system and offers ideas on how it could be improved. With regard to the chaplains, many of whom he criticises for their lack of commitment and compassion, he writes, in his Introduction, the following two sentences which might explain some of his own problems with the churches that he was involved with:

> *Those having the moral training of the prisoners in hand, especially ought to be beyond denominational bias and sectarian cant. Remembering it is not creed but Christ, not ritual but righteousness, not priesthood but piety, that are essential to the uplifting of men.*

John does find the Catholic priest one of the best of the chaplains being, 'a gentleman and a Christian' but does add, 'whatever may be the defects of his system and the errors of his theological code'. This does not sound like a man who had joined the Roman Catholic Church but with John we can never be certain of the truth.

He also criticised the 'hard labour' which he says was not cost effective and did not help to fit the prisoners for their lives in the world of work outside. In Leicester Prison, he tells us most of the labour consisted in 'wood-chopping'. The wood was first sawn by large gangs and Collett feels that the rogues tend to corrupt the first-timers when they are thrown together in this type of work. In his chapter entitled 'On The Saw' Collett describes how the system worked. The saw was a development of the 'crank' which in some prisons was used merely for useless mechanical 'hard labour', in the same way as the treadmill. He tells us that:

> *There were about eighty men employed in the work. It was given as first class "hard labour". They were divided into two portions, first the sawyers, and second choppers and tyers. The "saw" was worked by thirty men changing every quarter of an hour, thus twenty were constantly turning the "crank handles" and ten resting. The "saw" crank was fixed in a long building so that twenty men could stand in one long row, each in a small "stall". Some portion of each day all thirty men would turn, thus bringing two men together in each of ten "stalls".*

It was in this situation that Collett thought that the first offenders could be corrupted by the old hands as the operation was only supervised by one warder. In general prisoners could not talk to each other. In his book, *Victorian Prison Lives*, Philip Priestley points out that in 1853 a Royal Commission found at Leicester Prison:

> *. . . untried prisoners "suffered stoppages for offences such as the following:- 'Coughing to each other in the airing yard'; 'attempting to communicate', attempting to look over the stall in the chapel', and 'repeatedly turning round in chapel.'*

Perhaps the most revealing part of Collett's book for us is when he manages to link the evils of this work to a prisoner who, once again, we quickly recognize.

> *To show you the evil of this 'saw' association I will here state what occurred to an educated prisoner who had been committed for twelve months upon a very questionable charge of embezzlement. We all felt that his sentence was most excessive. The facts of the case were as follows. He was engaged upon the newspaper press as manager of the contract advertisement department of a daily paper. One day he was apprehended by a county court bailiff for a debt of fifteen pounds sixteen shillings. His employers were indebted to him to the extent of eighteen pounds eighteen shillings as commission. When taken, he desired the bailiff to accompany him to the office, where he would seek payment of the money due and discharge the debt for which he was apprehended. He was denied payment by the manager upon the ground that 'the proprietors must settle with him.' He then went to two customers and drew their accounts and paid the bailiff off. He afterward informed the manager what he had done, and gave him an account setting forth the fact of having drawn the accounts to the total of fifteen pounds sixteen shillings, and showing the balance due to him to be three pounds two shillings to make a just settlement. After a few weeks, the manager, upon his own authority, and without consulting the editor – who was the managing director – charged him with the crime of embezzling the amounts he had drawn from the customers to pay off the bailiff. He pleaded not guilty and was committed for trial. At his trial the jury found him guilty of a breach of the **letter** of the law, and the merciful (?) judge passed the above sentence, notwithstanding he had been previously a clergyman, and that such gentlemen as Gladstone, Bright and others gave him good testimonial. Now, some officers have an idea, fully borne out in their actions, that if an educated and gentlemanly prisoner come under their charge, he shall do all the roughest work and be made to associate with the most vulgar and villainous in the prison.*

On 'the saw' a pickpocket tells John of an address in Manchester which needed 'educated men with a gentlemanly appearance' to act as 'hooks' for the 'hands'. These men, with links to good society, acted as 'detectives' to provide information for the 'hands' or pickpockets.

We see a very different view of the case here than in the newspaper report and one that seems to have some credibility. Was John too clever for his immediate bosses who resented him and were pleased to orchestrate his downfall, or did he manipulate the true facts? Again, with the

recommendations from Gladstone and Bright, if these are true they link him to the most powerful men in the country. Gladstone became Liberal Prime Minister for the second time in 1880. John Bright was a leading radical Liberal who was for many years an M.P for Birmingham and served in Gladstone's cabinet. These are weighty references indeed and we can at the moment only wonder at how close John's connection was to these important men, whose politics he shared. John's record, however, leads us to be dubious of their authenticity

There is a picture of John as the frontispiece to the book. It shows him with a fashionable droopy moustache and thin long sideboards and wearing oval metal rimmed spectacles. As we are to discover later, it was not a book that would change his fortunes.

So we see John, a chastened man giving his lecture on the devil drink to the Ringstead villagers. Well, not exactly, for his speech told of his trial and imprisonment as a result of an 'unjust prosecution' and his book spells out clearly how he felt that he had been unfairly treated. Neither would we expect him to be swayed from his radical ideals. On Monday 3rd December 1883 he gave a lecture at Raunds Temperance Hall on 'Reforms needed by the working classes'.

A few months later, in February 1884, in the Leicester County Court, John was being sued for a debt of £1 that he owed. The debt was for a pair of boots from some five years earlier when Collett had been employed as a traveller for a boot and shoe manufacturer. The case is covered at some length, in the *Leicester Chronicle,* perhaps because he was beginning to gain some notoriety. In answer to questioning he reveals that he is a newspaper agent and author but only, 'by commission'. He states that his average earnings are 33s 6d a week but adds that he had been in distress some fifteen months ago and his wife and family had been in the Workhouse for some time. This would have been around the period when he was in gaol, although this is not mentioned.

There is a second case brought against him by a Mr. C, W. Stokes, a traveller to recover:

> *. . . the sum of £8 odd due for commission on advertisements procured by the defendant for a book which he had written on 'Prison Life' – Collett pleaded inability to pay more than 5s a month. (To defendant): On December 28 did you not publish a book entitled 'Horrible London'? Defendant: - Unfortunately I did. His Honour: He might do so, and probably it was a dead loss. – Defendant: It is sir; out of 5,000 copies published I have 4,800 on my hands (Laughter.) I have to keep my books; my books don't keep me (Laughter).*

In both cases he was ordered to pay five shillings a month. Mr. J. J. Harper, the judge, appeared to have had some sympathy with John Collett and we see that he seems to have been a likeable witty character who could please the crowds.

On the 5th August of the same year John was once again in court, this time for not paying a debt owed to L. E. Gee, a solicitor for the sum of £18 under a recent judgement. John admitted that he was the editor of the *Birmingham and Midlands Trades Journal* and was entitled to 20% of the profits – 'but up to the present time no profits had been made'. He continued:

> *Amongst other things, he was the author of a publication entitled 'Why should London wait?' and received some £40 for advertisements for the book while the work cost him £84. Of the number printed he had only sold 200 copies. He contributed to nine papers but did not get paid for everything he wrote, as literature was not a very paying game. (Laughter.) . . . He was also the author of a pamphlet entitled 'Experiences of Prison Life;' but the sales never reached 6000 copies, They sold at the rate of 500 per week for the first few weeks but as soon as the public read them they did not go off as quickly (Laughter.) He was not aware that*

the plaintiff had received a letter from his publishers saying that they would not have the remainder of the pamphlets for waste paper. He had written pamphlets on various subjects, and had lectured on temperance in connection with the blue ribbon movement; but altogether his earnings did not average £2 per week.

He was ordered to pay the debt, according to the original judgment. The judge, although called J. J. Hooper could be the same man as at his previous appearance. John is mistakenly reported as James and the titles of his publications differ in both newspaper reports. There are. As usual a few facts which make one wonder about the truth of John's claims. He declined to answer when asked if he had written the pieces in the *Daily Telegraph* on 'Why Should London Wait?'[For better housing etc] and certainly there was a series appearing there in late 1883. Secondly George Robert Sims, born in 1847, and most famous today for the poem beginning, *'It is Christmas Day in the Workhouse'*, was a successful radical journalist, campaigner and writer. He wrote pieces in the newspapers on 'Horrible London' which were later reprinted in book form. He also finished his education in Germany, [where John said in a later case that he had obtained his PhD]. Are these coincidences, or was John beginning to lose his hold on reality or was it deliberate fraud?

On 22nd August 1885 the *Tamworth Herald* printed a short article on the Trent Valley Brewery Company (Limited) of Litchfield. This was taken from *The Brewers' Review, '*a new publication devoted to the interests of the brewing trade, edited by Mr. J. T. Collette, M.A., Ph.D.'. John had written the article and it seems unlikely that he had remained teetotal in his appraisal of the company and its products. Was his new venture a success? We suspect not. The first prospectus of the *Brewing Trade Review* has the following statement:

The Country Brewers' Society contracts with its members to supply them with a Trade Newspaper. For this purpose two Trade Papers have been called into existence in the past which are still being issued. Circumstances in both cases have rendered the severing of the connexion with the County Brewers' Society necessary. From the large sum of money which the proprietor of the last of these two papers has recently demanded for his property it is clear that the value of the Society's name and assistance to these papers has been very great.

Somewhere in an archive there may be more to be found but it seems that John's paper did not last long. Perhaps it was he who tried to sell it for a' large sum of money'. If so, it seems very likely that he did not succeed.

By May 1887, John had moved to 2 Garfield Place, Bordesley Green, Small Heath, Birmingham. We know this because he was, once again, in court. This time he was in Birmingham Police Court. He hear that John Thomas Collett is described as, 'a doctor of philosophy, a curate, a scripture reader, editor &c'. He was charged with obtaining money from people by false pretences. The police asked for him to be remanded but John wanted the case heard immediately as he was sure he could prove his innocence.

Mary Ann Pullar explained how John had come to her house on the 9th May and handed her his card on which was written:

J.T. Collett, M.A., F.R.A.S., Editor of the Birmingham Midland Counties Trades Journal and Commercial Register, Commercial Buildings, Deritend. [Now part of Birmingham.]

Answering questions John told the court that he was a Doctor of Philosophy which he had obtained in Germany. The witness stated that he had told her that he was a curate at Ward End Church and

that he was collecting on behalf of a family called Inson who were in very distressing circumstances. Mary Pullar gave him:

> *. . . a bottle containing spirits, a few biscuits and 1s.*

A sickly looking man called Inson was then called and he told the court that Collett had never passed on any of these gifts.

When asked what he had to say to the charge, John spoke at length, as one would expect. He claimed that, finding that Inson was sick and could not work or pay his rent, he had volunteered to collect money for him and had done so for some weeks past.

> *He gave a long list of names and wished to go into the minutest details with regard to the conversations and transactions he had had with the people names; but the Magistrate's Clerk, (Mr. Barradale), frequently interrupted with the remark, 'Confine yourself to the shilling'.*

John told them finally that in all he had collected about 14s 6d but when asked he said that he did not have it with him but had the 'equivalent at home'.

The case then moved on to a charge that he had sent a letter to a Mr. F. Henshaw of Green Lane asking him for money. The heading of the letter was the Birmingham Midland Counties Trade Journal and Commercial Register.

> *The circular explained that the paper circulated in India, Ceylon, Japan, Borneo, Java, Manila, Mauritius, Hawaiian Islands and other foreign parts*

The next witness said that Collett had asked for money for the Insons and he had said he had been the Scripture Reader at St Martin's, Bull Ring some nine years previously. John admitted that this was untrue. He was remanded to appear on the Wednesday but it appears that he did not turn up for, on the Thursday, he was arrested and now admitted that he had collected money for the Insons but that he had spent it.

When he was sentenced, on Wednesday 25th May, 1887, it was stated that he had a previous conviction for embezzlement at Chester [I have not found any proof of this. Could it be a misheard Leicester?], and he was sentenced to three months hard labour as a 'rogue and vagabond'.

It is obvious that John was on a steep downward spiral into debt and petty crime. He was described at his trial for fraud as a, 'shabbily dressed, well built man of about forty years of age'. His hopes of a career as preacher, journalist or author seem dashed and debt was driving him to crime. It also seems likely that drink was still the major part of his problem.

In August 1887, at Aston Police Court, he was charged again, this time with 'obtaining alms at Ward End on 5th May by false and fraudulent pretences' It is reported in the Leicester Chronicle under the headline:

> ***"DR." T. COLLETT AGAIN***

It is clear that the newspaper is querying the title, "Dr". 'It also becomes obvious that these are offences that occurred as part of his previous charges, of collecting money for the Insons, which were not dealt with at the time. Again the amounts are small: one is for 1s another 6d and included

are items such as a pair of boots or an old dress. The defence lawyer asked for leniency for John who he said was:

> *. . . a well educated man who up to about 1880 was in good circumstances but, in consequence of intemperate habits and other causes he had got into trouble in Leicester and was sentenced to 12 months hard labour.*

Despite the pleas and his promise to reform he was sentenced to another two months hard labour. Was this just justice taking its course or was John Thomas Collett right in thinking he was being deliberately persecuted because of his political views? Was he just a Micawber who in desperation began to slip ever more into crime and deception?

We know that, like Micawber before him, he decided to try for his fortune in the New World. Exactly when he went is not certain but we do know that his wife Hannah and his three children, John, George and James stated in a later Census that they had emigrated to America in 1887. I have not found the family on board ship with certainty but there is one possibility. On 24th May 1888 the American Line steamer, *Lord Clive,* left Queenstown in Ireland on its way from Liverpool and docked in Philadelphia harbour on 5th June. She had on board a John T. Collett with his family. Unlike all the other people on that page of the *Passenger List* there are no ages and, possibly, no other Christian names for the family. We have:

Collett	*Jno*	*a*	*M*	*Lab*
"	*Mrs*	*a*	*F*	*Wife*
"	*Boy (or Roy?)*	*a*	*M*	*Lab*
"	*Child*	*c*	*"*	*Child*
"	*Child*	*c*	*F*	*"*

They are all heading for Philadelphia as settlers. Now, some of this is wrong. The oldest son would have been at least 16 and so an adult. The youngest son, however, is shown as female although this may be a mistake made in writing across a page without ruled lines. For the rest, if we take into account the Colletts' entry in the 1881 Leicester Census, where information is wrong or not given, it does seem to follow a pattern. All we can say is that it could be our family and their later assertion that they arrived in 1887 was an understandable mistake.

Almost all the 1890 USA Federal Census was lost in a fire so we do not see them together in a Census in their new country. The 1889 Philadelphia City Directory does record John T Collett as a 'Laborer', and a year later as a Civil Engineer living in the Bullitt Building there. It is almost certainly the same home where we find Hannah and the couple's children in later Directories.

What we also discover is that John died in Philadelphia on 17th December 1894 and was buried four days later in a Philadelphia Cemetery. His occupation was given as journalist and his address as 116 Spruce Street. Was this a current occupation or was it harking back to earlier times in England. He was recorded as married and was just 45 years old. The left hand edge of the certificate is missing but the cause of death is probably, 'Mania with Cellulitis and Periostitis of face and jaw.' John seems to have had a wound to his jaw, perhaps from a tooth extraction, which became infected, destroying the tissue and bone and poisoning his system. In the days before antibiotics infections could lead to death with frightening rapidity. It would have been a difficult and painful death. How "mania"

contributed to his death is another matter. His drinking and erratic behaviour were perhaps part of an undiagnosed illness. We cannot be sure.

In the Philadelphia City Directory for 1894 Hannah and her sons, John, who is a clerk and George, a 'laborer', are shown living together. There is no sign of the youngest son, James or of John so, probably, either the names were collected after his death or when he was still in hospital. Certainly, by the 1998 Directory Hannah is shown as. 'wid Jno T.', and her sons John and Thomas J (James?) are shown with her at a new address in Naudain, Philadelphia.

When we find John's family again they have moved to 148 Cox Street in Camden City, New Jersey. In the 1900 United States Federal Census his son John, aged 29, is now the 'Head of House'. He is married to Catharine aged 28, who was born in Wisconsin but whose father came from Scotland. John is a proof reader, as is his unmarried brother George who is 26 years old. The youngest brother, James, aged 25, is also living in the house and is a tinsmith. John Thomas's widow, Hannah, aged 52 is also living with her son. We see that the two eldest sons have followed in their father's footsteps into the business of print. The family had still not become naturalised American citizens.

Back in England, John's brother, James George Collett, was also making a name for himself. He had moved back to Birmingham with the family and first worked as a draper's assistant. He was a Baptist and attended Preachers' Classes run by Henry Platten the Minister at the Graham Street Baptist Church. From there he progressed to *Rawdon Baptist College* and became a joint Pastor of the Kings Heath and Moseley Baptist Churches from 1888 until 1913. Was he relieved that his wayward older brother had emigrated to America before he took up his appointment? He lived to be over one hundred years old, dying in 1962. In 2009 the *New Life Baptist Church* in Kings Heath was being renovated and found, built into the walls, were two time capsules, one from 1872 and the other from 1897. Included, among newspapers and documents of the church was a handwritten note from James George Collett dated 1897.

Although, at times, a painful story to tell, these pages will have to serve as a time capsule for his brother John Thomas Collett, who, for a few months, caused, 'no small commotion', in a small Northamptonshire village.

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My thanks to Agnes Burton for the details from the Ringstead Baptist Church Book: to Helen Ford (archives@warwick.ac.uk) for the details from the Brewing Trade Review: to Mrs. Shirley Shire, Librarian at Bristol Baptist College for details of John Collett's dismissal from the college: to Rudolf Schmidt (www.antiquusmorbus.com)and Nicola Cook, Library Assistant at the Welcome Library for helping with the meaning of the cause of death on the death certificate
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Chapter Two

Sins of the Father?

William Cobley (c1826 – 1868) and his son William (1856 - ?)

One Sunday in early summer in 1842 a young woman was making her way to chapel in Ringstead. She was, according to the newspaper report a pretty girl and we can imagine her in her Sunday best, perhaps aware of how well she looked. Then, to her annoyance, a young man who had been drinking heavily, or, as the newspaper reporter puts it, in a heavy, sub Dickensian humorous style, 'had been spending his time in the service of Bacchus instead of Cupid' comes up to her. He then 'coils his arm three times round her waist'. Even allowing for the tiny waists of the time this seems unlikely so we must assume it means on three occasions.

Hannah then continues with her evidence at the Wellingborough Petty Sessions:

> *"I says," continued Hannah, "Bill just uncoil your arm will you? When he gives it another coil. Then I gives him a push, to make him uncoil his arm, when unbeknown to me, he flops into a ditch and begins a singing 'Here I lies alone to die all hunder the willor tree.' Then I says get hup, and don't lay a roaren there you drinking brute, when up he gets, an kicks me and calls me names."*

The young woman was Hannah Houghton and the young man was William Cobley. Apparently, 'he had kept Hannah company for some time." William admitted the charge but thought:

> *. . . it very cruel on the part of Hannah to make the charge, and said "it warrant natural."*

We can see the law's reluctance, until very recently, to get involved in, 'domestics'. 'The Magistrates advised them to make it up and settle the matter out of Court. They did so, and left the Hall as loving as turtle doves.'

I had intended following these star-crossed lovers to see what happened to them. The spoilt walk to chapel happened on the 4th September 1842, some fifteen months after the Census. Surely it would be simple to identify the parties and carry their lives forward. In the case of Hannah she has proved elusive. Is she the Hannah Houghton who was born in Lowick in 1822, married Thomas Nutt of Wollaston and lived to be ninety-five? There is no sign of her in Ringstead and she seems some five years too old for our Romeo. Perhaps she is the Hannah Houghton born in Holcot in about 1822 who married Thomas Parker of Sywell in 1844, the same year as our Lowick girl?

There are also other possibilities. But the most likely Hannah is actually Anne Houghton, born in about 1827 in Lowick, who was the sister of Hannah Nutt. In 1841, she is living with her parents in Lowick and by 1851 is a servant in Thrapston. She marries Joseph Allen of Woodford in 1856 and lives there afterwards, bringing up a large family. It seems more likely that she would be walking to church in Ringstead. We also notice that, in the 1871 Census, she is living at 13 Pig Lane Woodford and her eldest son is George Houghton, who is 18 years old, and is recorded as 'son of wife'. He had been baptised in Lowick, the son of Anne, on 23rd April 1854. This is long after William Cobley had left the area.

Unfortunately we cannot be certain which of these Hannah Houghtons was that girl, walking to chapel one September day in 1842. What we do know is that she did not marry the drunken young man who assaulted her. William Cobley was one of a wide family. The Ringstead Parish Registers are full of Cobley births in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but, by 1851 there is only Elizabeth, widow of William Cobley (possibly a great uncle of our William) and her four children. She is now married to twenty-six year old coal; dealer, Lovell Warren, some seventeen years her junior.

We see the evidence of this flight from Ringstead in the 1881 Censuses for Northampton. Samuel Cobley (27) and his family; Samuel Cobley (51) and his wife and family (all born in Ringstead); George Cobley (25) and his wife, Joseph Cobley (38) and his wife and family are all there and all working in the boot and shoe trade. The new factories were drawing men and women from the outwork villages.

Our William Cobley was probably born in late 1826 and was baptised in Ringstead on 26th February 1827. He was, like many growing boys, to cause his parents problems. In all his run-ins with the law there does seem, however, a perversely likeable, sense of misplaced fun.

We know that William's drunken foolishness was not a one-off episode. In February 1844, he was again before the courts because of his drinking. One of the new police force had had problems with him. The Mercury reports that:

> *Police constable Tuckey brought a charge against Thos. Whittering and Wm. Cobley for being drunk and disorderly.*

The behaviour of one of the drunken men seems to echo the dramatic gestures of William towards Hannah. We are told that:

> *One of the worthies, by the force of liquor, imagined himself so strong that he was calling on his companion to come and hold him up till he placed his feet on the globe and shoved it out of its place. His companion was preparing to lend him the necessary aid when Tuckey came up and prevented the accomplishment of his dire intention, which threatened the position of our little globe. The conduct of the defendant on the whole was proved to be of so harmless a nature that the bench dismissed the case.*

When we look at the cases of the men and women from Ringstead that came up before the courts we see that drunkenness was the greatest cause. The others are mainly poaching, petty theft and assault. We know that the Temperance movement was extremely strong during the Victorian era and it had some cause. We see today the 'binge drinking' problems in our villages and small market towns. Then it was even worse, made more shocking by the poverty of the families of the drinkers. Originally, in the eighteenth century cheap gin had been the main ruin of mothers and fathers and the 1830 Beer Act had been brought in to allow beer and cider only public houses, aimed specifically at the working classes. These were often started in a front parlour of a house and sometimes could allow the landlord or landlady to buy their house and even move next door.

There was some regulation, as we have seen in Ringstead in earlier stories, with the prosecution of landlords for serving beer after time but in other ways, even by today's standards it was very lax. It was not until 1886 that it became illegal to serve alcoholic drinks to children under thirteen. In 1854 an Act banned Sunday drinking between the times of 2.30 pm and after 10 pm. The following year another Bill proposed the almost complete cessation of Sunday trading in London. These led to two great demonstrations in Hyde Park with riots and many arrests.

It was not long after his second arrest that William's parents, John and Mary took the family south to Canterbury. It is there, in 1851, that we find them. John had been an agricultural worker and after the1841 Enclosure of Ringstead it would have been more difficult for him to make a living. Perhaps there was a family member involved. Sarah, the wife of a William Cobley living in Lowick, had been born in Kent. This William had been born in Bromham in Huntingdonshire and of course Hannah Houghton had probably come from Lowick. It is all very tenuous but, for whatever reason, the family moved to Canterbury and John became a 'Railway Engine Cleaner'. Perhaps the coming of the railway to Ringstead had opened his eyes to new opportunities to get out of poverty. His five-year-old son, Henry, had been born in Kent so it seems that the family probably moved there sometime around 1845 or 1846.

By the 1851 Census, William had already married and had a family of his own. His wife was a Whitstable woman called Mary Ann Nelson. Her maiden name was Perkins and she had married Edward Nelson in 1843. He had died in 1848 and, it seems, within months, she had married William. They are living at Goulding Court, Staplegate, Canterbury and William is working as a 'cordwainer' or shoemaker. There are four children, Edward N. (8), and three girls, Anne E. N. (7), Ellen (2) and Esther (8 months). They all have the surname Cobley but it seems certain that the oldest two children are from Mary Ann's first marriage and the 'N' is for Nelson.

It is now possible that William now settled down to domestic life and forgot his old ways. It seems that the couple moved to Whitstable, Mary Ann's birthplace and their youngest child, Esther was born there in about 1858 but in the following year Mary Ann died. Did this send William back off the rails again? In January 1860 William came before the St. Augustine Petty Sessions in Canterbury charged with an assault at Whitstable. Unfortunately William had failed to turn up for his trial and the constable who had served him with the summons stated that he had told him that he did not intend attending.

The landlord of the *Hoy Endeavour* public house had spotted a woman trying to pickpocket, 'a countryman who was the worse for liquor'. He started to put her out of the pub by force. At this point William decided to get involved and threw landlord and woman out together. The following disturbance meant that the landlord was unable to clear his house until one o'clock the following morning. In his absence William was fined £2, or one month's imprisonment.

Belatedly William arrived, claiming that the train from Whitstable had been late and saying that he had never interfered with the landlord and had just thrown water in the woman's face to 'aid in her recovery' from the hysterics. He pleaded for mitigation of the sentence but this was not allowed except to give him one week to pay the fine.

A year later he was living with his parents in 2 St. Radegund Street, Canterbury. He is still a shoemaker and the younger children of the marriage, Ellen (11), William (4) and Esther (3) are with him. Next door, with his wife and family, is his younger brother, George (26) who has followed his father onto the railways and is an 'Engine fireman'. George too was having his problems On Tuesday 21st of that same year he brought an action against Canterbury Friendly Society of which he was a member. When he asked for sickness benefit, because of illness the Society said that he had not been a 'sound man' when he became a member, even though he claimed that he was, and so he was not entitled to benefit. In fact he was, 'ruptured'. In these days before the Welfare State the Friendly Societies, run by their members, were a lifeline for many poor families. They relied on most people remaining healthy and so did not allow certain groups to join. These men, often the neediest, were left to get through as best they could. The clause of the Canterbury Society which was used against George makes this very clear.

That no person shall be admitted a member of this society under the age of seventeen nor over the age of thirty years, nor shall at the same time, nor at any time after his admission into the society belong to, or be a member of any other friendly society, nor shall be afflicted with the gout, rheumatism, kings evil, consumption, asthma or any other disease which may tend to shorten human life or that may occasion him to claim any of the benefits of this society. But if at any future time it can be proved that any person was subject to one or more of the aforesaid disorders or complaints, or being a member of any other friendly society, he shall be immediately excluded this society without any return of money etc.

I am reminded of a Friendship Club in another village I know which removed the fuse each week from the plug of their cooker in the village hall so that no other group should use it. Friendly, up to a point! It seems however, that George won his case.

William's son, also William began to cause problems for his widowed father. He appeared before the Canterbury Police Court on August 5th 1867. The Kentish Chronicle for the 10th August records that:

A young boy, named Cobley, was charged with being found lying in a coal shed for an unlawful purpose. On being found, the policeman asked him what he was doing there, and he said he had been turned out of doors by his father.

The father of the boy appeared and denied the truth of the boy's assertion. He said that he had never turned him out, but he had got into the companionship of thieves and bad boys, and had left home, absolutely refusing to work. He was quite willing to take the boy home, and do the best he could for him.

The chairman severely reprimanded the boy for his bad behaviour and sent him home in company with his father.

The young William could only have been about eleven years old but his father was struggling, as his own father John, had struggled with him. It may be also that William, the father was not well, for in the spring of the following year he died. The grandfather, John, died a year later. [At the General Quarter Sessions at Canterbury on 2nd January 1866 a John Cobley had been sentenced to 3 months imprisonment for house breaking. We can only hope that it was no relation.]

William's family was scattered by this double blow. Ellen had married Charles Kirby in 1864 who in 1871 is a City of Canterbury Corporation worker. Esther is staying with their father's sister, Sophia who had married to James Henshaw. The whole family, including Esther, are working at a paper mill in Chartham in Kent.

Orphaned, and probably living with one of his aunts in Ruttington Lane in Canterbury, William, seems to be out of control. In a report of the Canterbury Police Court on Thursday 7th January 1869, we are told by the *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald* that:

William Cobley, a youth under 14 years of age was charged with stealing a pair of female boots worth 5s 6d from the shop of Wm. Moore in Burgate-street.

Samuel Warren, who had a clothes shop saw William steal the boots from outside the shop and gave chase. He caught him and handed William over to the police. Showing some of the naivety of his father, when young, William blurted out, 'I stole the boots, but I did not steal your trousers yesterday'. William was then also charged with stealing the trousers which Mr. Warren had missed but had not known until then what had happened to them. The trousers were said to be worth 16s

9d, [some £40 today], although Green, a pawnbroker, only gave him five shillings for them. Green was warned by the court about accepting new articles into pawn and, probably unfairly, one thinks of Fagin and Oliver Twist Another boy, called Rogers also gives evidence that he did not see who took the trousers but that he, like all the boys in the gang, took a share of the profits.

William was sent to the Quarter Sessions which seem to have been very soon after his first appearance. He pleaded guilty on both counts although he still maintained that he had not been the one who had stolen the trousers. He was ordered to be 'imprisoned and kept to hard labour for a period of three weeks in the gaol, on the expiration of that term to be sent to Red Hill reformatory for five years'.

Did the Recorder, J. Deedes feel that he was doing the right thing by a young orphan who was going wrong or was he moved by the figures that he had read out at the start of the session and his regret at the number of crimes and prisoners during the past year? Did he feel that removing William for five years would improve the statistics? Does some of this strike a chord today?

William served his time in Canterbury City Gaol and was taken into Redhill Reformatory on 26th January 1869.

In 1788 a small group of men had met in St. Paul's Coffee House in London and decided to try to do something for the children who lived, and often died, on the streets of London. This became the *Royal Philanthropic Society*. They started an institute for these homeless boys and girls in Southwark and gradually widened their activities. In 1845 it was decided only to take boys and to move into the country. Of course, as would be the case today, residents around possible sites were not happy at the prospect of having delinquent boys on their doorstep and one offered a thousand pounds for it be located elsewhere. This money was accepted.

In 1848 the institution moved to Redhill, near Reigate, in Surrey and a Farm School was established. At first it was a voluntary scheme and some parents even paid for their wayward children to go there. The Reformatory School Act of 1854 changed this and Redhill became Redhill Reformatory School and only received boys sent there by the courts. In many ways this was a progressive measure, and was supported by Charles Dickens, because it was in place of prison for young offenders. By 1857 there were five houses at Redhill with some 250 boys, each house having a master and a matron, rather on the pattern of the public schools.

As well as the farming, crafts such as basket making, tailoring and shoemaking were taught. There were sports teams and a choir and a 'Harvest Home' Open Day when the great and the good came to see the work of the school.

In September 1869 the *Illustrated London News* reported:

> Home of the Philanthropic Society took place at their farm, Redhill, on Wednesday week. The attendance of visitors was unusually large. The various buildings were gaily decorated for the occasion, and the whole establishment appeared to the best advantage. Nothing could exceed the cleanliness and good order displayed through the buildings and the grounds of the farm and the appearance of all the rescued "waifs and strays" of humanity under the society's charge was highly creditable. A muster of boys first took place. Then a certain number of them were told off to carry the "last load" to the farmyard, one of the most pleasing features in the days' proceedings. A thanksgiving service in the chapel with a sermon by the Rev. W.F.C.S. Fraser followed. After the service in the chapel came races and

games, a supper for the boys, the address of the chairman of the day (Mr. J. Gladstone, Treasurer of the society) and distribution of the prizes.

One can imagine William and the other boys fidgeting as further speeches followed.

For many boys it may have been a happy, organised time away and their lives were turned around, but others would have resented the uniform of brown corduroy with a forage cap and all that went with it.

There is a record of what William looked like when he entered Redhill. He was 4ft 10½ inches tall, had a ruddy complexion with dark brown hair, and large brown eyes. He also had large ears and eyebrows and a very hairy upper lip with a deep dimple in his chin. He was 'very red around the bridge of the nose from blows in fighting'. We have a description of a young boy who was a stereotype of a street urchin. To complete the picture we are told in his Redhill file that he could only read in easy (underlined) monosyllables and could write very little.

His age was given as thirteen years and he had attended the National School in Canterbury, although one suspects he had not been a regular attender. He had also worked with horses on a farm at Shalford near Canterbury, where he earned four shillings a week. Both his parents and his grandfather, John Cobley were dead. His grandmother, Mary Ann Cobley (nee Whiteman) seems to have cared for him most for she visited him on August 8th of his admission year. As one would expect, perhaps, misdemeanours and punishments are entered on his record over the next three years. But only at the rate of three or four a year. He was impertinent, noisy at work, caused 'disorder' and was idle and shirked school. On one occasion he was fined three pence for, 'damage to school wall'. Perhaps he was trying out newfound writing skills. We get a picture of a boisterous lad used to the rough-and-ready give-and-take of the street.

On May 6th 1872 it is noted that his grandmother wanted to see him but she 'was too infirm to travel'. He was given leave until 18th May. Perhaps it was to visit his grandmother and family in Canterbury before he left because, on May 29th it is simply written in his file, 'Emigrated to Canada'.

Perhaps, with the best of intentions, as many as thirty-five young men were sent each year to various parts of the British Empire. William was one of these and was sent to Canada. This practice of sending children abroad had started as early as 1619 when the Virginia Company took 100 street children to work on their plantations. This migration of child labour continued to the colonies on a small scale but it was from about 1870 that the large movement of children and young people to Canada began in earnest. In part it was a response to the overcrowded cities with their unemployment, poverty and epidemics of cholera and typhoid.

The children came from local government workhouses as well as 'philanthropic' charities. Two women, Maria Rye and Annie Macpherson, set up schemes in the 1860s to send children abroad, especially to Canada. By 1880 it was the Dr. Barnado's Homes who became the largest 'exporter'. Some 80,000 children went to Canada between 1870 and 1914 and the Barnado schemes sent over 35,000 of these.

There was a critical report of the practice by Andrew Doyle in 1875. He told of children going to a distribution house, at a place called Marchemont in Canada, and the farmers coming to pick which children they wanted. Doyle believed that the farmers were mainly after free child labour to replace paid help and he alleged that many of the houses had no washing facilities, there was rarely any training and in some cases there was evidence of cruelty. After a few years, however, it was considered that the problems had been sorted out and the schemes started again and did not

decline until the 1920s. This traffic was resurrected during the Second World War, as part of the evacuation policy, to take children away from the dangers of bombing and invasion. It was originally intended to take some 20,000 children to Canada but on 17th September 1940 the *City of Benares*, was torpedoed and seventy of the children on board were lost. This halted the evacuation of the children to Canada but the sending, by charities, of vulnerable children to Australia continued on a small scale, until 1967.

William left aboard the *S.S. Scandinavian* from Liverpool on 30th May 1872 when he was sixteen years old. It may have been discovered that he had not been christened in Canterbury as had been thought, and on 22nd February 1872 he was baptized in the school chapel. One the same double spread of the *Baptism Register* and for the same date are another eleven boys whose "abodes" vary from Norfolk to Derbyshire. It seems likely that John, along with the other boys and young men, was being prepared for his journey. He went as part of Reverend Herring's party of 32 children, mainly boys and young men between the ages of ten and eighteen. The Reverend A. Styleman Herring was a leading light in the *Clerkenwell and Central Emigration Club and Society for London and the Provinces* which aimed to assist the poor to find a new life. *The Scandinavian* arrived at Quebec on 11th June 1872.

We cannot find what happened to William next. Did he make a better life for himself? His Redhill file records that he wrote to his sister in 1873 and to his grandmother in 1874. There was one final letter recorded in the year prior to February 1876 in which he said that he was doing well in Canada. His grandmother died in 1876 and the letters seem to have stopped.

Did William really 'do well' in his new land? Some of the 'Home Children' would have found happiness and new hope but we know that this was not always the case. As the online history of the Royal Philanthropic Society briefly notes:

> *Some may have bettered themselves and lived long lives, others may not have fared so well in foreign lands.*

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Chapter Three

Greater Love Hath No Man

John William Sawford (1879 – 1900)

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the rise of organisations in all spheres of English life. The County Councils were formed in 1888 followed in 1894 by the Local Government Act which instituted the Rural District and Parish Councils. It was also a time when many of the sports centralised and codified their rules and centralised. We see the formation of the Football Association in 1863, Rugby Football Union in 1871 and Amateur Athletic Association in 1880.

This was also the era when many uniformed voluntary groups were founded. It began with the Salvation Army in 1865 followed by the Church Boy's Brigade in 1883 and the St John Ambulance Brigade in June 1887. These groups provided training and discipline, with a religious and moral element. Government and communities, then and now, saw them, in part, as a channel for adolescent boys and young men to use their energies in useful ways rather than causing trouble and disruption. Times were changing rapidly, however, and women and girls were very soon involved.

The St John Ambulance Brigade had emerged out of the St John Ambulance Association which had been formed some ten years earlier. The Association taught first aid and awarded certificates to those who passed an examination. At first this ran alongside the Brigade which was formed of volunteers who had received their Association certificate in first aid and health care. It was a uniformed organisation, run on military lines, which used these skills especially at events and in the workplace.

Dr Mackenzie of Raunds ran St John Ambulance Association classes in Ringstead in the autumn of 1892. On the 12th December twenty women and seventeen men sat the examination and only two women failed. We see in the successful candidates many of the familiar names of the village. There are Bulls and Cottinghams, Mayes and Weekleys and Childs and Sawfords.

Walter and Elizabeth Sawford, probably husband and wife, both passed. The Sawford name was unknown in the village until the end of the eighteenth century when Thomas Sawford married Mary Musket on October 14th 1790 in the Parish Church. Thomas died just three years later and Mary re-married. It was probably his brother, Henry, who married Susannah Wilson on the 29th October 1792. The family seem to have come from just over the county border, in Bedfordshire, probably from the Knotting area, some nine miles due south of Ringstead. William and Susannah had three sons, John, George and William who married and a daughter, Elizabeth who died a spinster aged just 28 years old.

It is George, an agricultural labourer, whose line we are following here. He married Ann Cobley (nee Saddenton or Saddington), the widow of Robert Cobley who had also died after just three years of marriage, aged twenty-three. They had had a daughter Sarah. George and Ann had two sons Thomas and William. It was William who married Esther Hornsby on 14th October 1847. She too was from Knotting in Bedfordshire, and perhaps William had met her when he had visited relatives. On the other hand she was a 'servant' at their marriage so perhaps she had followed the family trail to Ringstead. Their happiness was, once again short lived. They had a son George who had received a

Wesleyan baptism and was buried on July 6th 1849 and five days later, aged twenty-four, Esther followed him.

William was a young widower but, as was the usual practice, he quickly re-married, to Mary Ann Barker, on November 3rd 1851. She came from Old in Northamptonshire and was once again a 'servant' so perhaps she had come to Ringstead. William was a shoemaker and like many of them he was a non-conformist and the children were baptised in the Ringstead Wesleyan Chapel, as part of the Higham Ferrers Wesleyan Circuit.

The history of the Wesleyan Methodists in Ringstead is less documented that the Particular Baptists and probably goes back further than is recorded. Whellan's Gazetteer and Directory of Northamptonshire for 1849 does tell us that:

> *A blacksmith's shop has lately been converted into a Methodist Chapel.*

According to the Religious Census of 1851, however, a Wesleyan Chapel had been erected in 1814 and we know that such a chapel was sold in 1817 for £12 9s 0d. The building in Chapel Street, now a private house, was registered for worship on October 1st 1857 and the present frontage and extra schoolrooms were added in 1878. It was not until July 30th 1896, however, that it was registered for marriages.

The children of William and Mary Ann were John, Walter, George, Mary Ann and Louisa. We can see from the Registers that, from Henry and Susannah, at the end of the eighteenth century, the Sawfords had now become part of the Ringstead family of names.

Walter, the second oldest child, was born in July 1854 and baptised on the 8th of November of the same year. He, like his father, became a shoemaker and married, across the river, to Elizabeth Perkins, on December 25th 1872, when they were both eighteen years old. She was from Little Addington and a lacemaker which was becoming an increasingly unusual profession in the area. The couple had eight children and it is John William, the third child who was born in 1879 whose story this is.

If we can now return to those successful St John Ambulance Certificate candidates we see that the Sawfords were a family who took an active part in the community. Walter became a member, and one of the earliest chairmen, of the Ringstead Parish Council. In 1881 they were living in Carlow but by 1891 had moved to Shop [High] Street where Walter describes himself as a "hand-sewn shoemaker", living next door to his cousin Alfred, a carrier, and his family.

The successful candidates were presented with their certificates on the evening of Wednesday 8th February 1893 at a 'well-attended public tea at the Temperance Hall, This was followed by public meeting, a distribution of certificates, and a variety entertainment. There was a 'glee', entitled 'Hail Smiling Morn' which was sung by a mixed quartet. After the presentation the variety entertainment included:

> *Comic song in character, "Knocked 'em in the Old Kent-road," Mr. Head (cheered and "Frolics of Parliament" given); recitation, "The Doctor's Fright," Mr. G. Baker; song; "On the Banks of Allan Water, Miss Bailey; song, "Off to Philadelphia", Mr Walter Hall.*

There was then an interval while the St John classes went through a series of bandaging exercises as well as stretcher drill, 'which were inspected by Dr. Mackenzie and pronounced to be 'well done'. Then the programme of songs and recitations started again.

It may seem a little odd in comparison to the modern ceremonies for the giving of First Aid certificates but it was a new adventure for many there and they certainly knew how to make an occasion of it. Songs were to village meetings what raffles are today. Is that a metaphor for the changing times?

At first the Association and Brigade ran alongside each other but the Association morphed into a Brigade as a branch of the Wellingborough District. By 1897 the Brigade was well in its stride and on 11th September 1897:

> *What was probably the largest parade of any provincial corps took place on Saturday at Wellingborough . . . when nearly 200 officers, men, and nursing sisters were present . . . All but few of the men were in full uniform, whilst the nursing sisters also wore their neat and useful dress, and everyone on parade presented a smart appearance. Hen, likewise, the stretchers, the wheeled litters, the cycle transports, the ambulance wagon, and all the necessary appliances for a properly fitted-up Ambulance Corps, all being in evidence.*

The Ringstead Corps were at this Parade as they were at the annual 'smoking concert', held in October by the Brigade at the Wellingborough Drill Hall. Whether Walter's son, John William, was present we do not know but we do know that he had become a member at around this time for we next meet him being sent off to the Boer War.

Although not much remembered today, the British were engaged in small wars and battles across the world throughout the nineteenth century. The nature of warfare was changing and the set piece battles such as Waterloo to a mutually recognized set of rules was disappearing as the machinery of war increased in accuracy and power. The unwillingness of many British commanders to recognize and adjust to this change was seen at the infamous Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava in the Crimean War, in 1854, where cavalry uselessly charged at cannons with terrible results.

What had been shown by Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole in the Crimea was the way that good nursing care and hygiene could dramatically reduce the number of soldiers killed through disease and infection. Unfortunately these military and medical lessons were known but were not sufficiently acted upon.

The Boers had risen in 1881 and, led by Paul Kruger, had defeated the British. The discovery of gold in the Transvaal and diamonds in the Kimberley area, on the borders of Cape Colony, had increased the conflict between the Boer farmers and the Uitlanders, the new immigrants, who were mainly British. The Uitlanders had few political rights but they were backed by the multi-millionaires, Cecil Rhodes and Alfred Beit. Rhodes, in particular, acted in Africa as the East India Company had earlier done in Asia, as an unofficial arm of the British Empire. The British army became involved and tried to take the Transvaal and Orange Free State. On October 11th 1899 the Boer President, Kruger, sent an ultimatum, insisting that the army withdrew from these states. The British Government refused and the second Anglo-Boer War began.

It was a confusing war of sieges and skirmishes where small numbers of Boer farmers inflicted defeats on a numerically superior army led by men bewildered by this new type of guerrilla warfare. It was also a war where letters home from literate soldiers, and newspaper articles from the front by war correspondents, quickly alerted the British public to the nature and conditions of the conflict. Published in the Rushden Echo on 15th February 1901, by a private in the Coldstream Guards, was a soldier's diary which the writer "hopes will enlighten the inhabitants of Rushden and Higham Ferrers district as to the way the British Soldier has been treated". He writes:

> *We arrived at Klip Drift and that was one of the worst times we have had. We were on short rations – very short indeed – for all we could get were two biscuits a day, and even then we were sometimes robbed. Whose fault it was I cannot say, but I know we were nearly starved. To make it worse it was very wet at the time and often we were in two feet of water. After Cronje was caught, we advanced to Bloemfontein, and were about killed to make a name for a certain person.*

During the Nineteenth Century the Royal Army Medical Corps had slowly developed but it was realised by the government that there was not enough medical support to fight the war in South Africa. Within three weeks of the declaration of war, on October 11th 1899, the St John Ambulance Brigade was asked to provide a volunteer force to back up the Medical Corps. By 13th November 1899 the first twenty-three of these volunteers had arrived at the St John Headquarters in Clerkenwell.

The Wellingborough Division prided itself as being one of the best of the provincial groups and the *Northampton Mercury* reported that, on Wednesday 20th* December 1899, the Ringstead Corps had sent: [*the memorial tablet states 20th November; there may be a difference between the volunteering date and the call-up]:

> *. . . one of their number, John W. Sawford (son of Mr. Walter Sawford, chairman of the Parish Council) for ambulance work in South Africa. The division all turned out and marched to the station. Dr. Mackenzie and the men of the corps presented young Sawford with part of his outfit. Not being able to be present at the "[s]end off", Dr. Mackenzie wrote bidding him "Goodbye", good luck, and a safe return to the old country". Young Sawford left by the 6.12 train for London, the men all heartily wishing him God speed and a safe return.*

He was expected to sail for South Africa just one week later. In that week he would have reported to St. John's Gate in London and perhaps had a very brief period of training with the army at Aldershot or Netley.

The *London Standard* tells us of the first St John volunteers, who sailed in November, that:

> *Each man provides his own outfit and underclothing and Brigade uniform, the khaki suits and field or sea kit being paid for by the St. John Ambulance Association.*

The article goes on to add:

> *Considerable numbers of nursing sisters of the Brigade have volunteered for service in South Africa, but owing to the Army Nursing Reserve being more than equal to meet the requirements of public service, the War Office has not found it necessary to call for volunteers from the Nursing Divisions of the Brigade.*

Throughout the war, the generals remained unwilling to call up sufficient female nurses of any kind and this probably cost many lives.

In an article in the *Proceedings of the St John Historical Society*, Professor Peter Beighton quotes from an account by James Crook ,of the Blackpool Division of the Brigade, who went up to London a few weeks after John Sawford. It is likely that John's experiences would have followed a similar pattern:

During the time we were in London we had to have two hours drill in the morning and two in the afternoon. Our nights were spent in the Strand or some other place. On Sunday January 7, we had a church parade in full khaki uniform. At the conclusion of the service we were formed in front of the church and addressed by a couple of gentlemen after which they wished us "God speed". On Monday we paraded at 9 am and were conducted to the Tower of London, where we spent a very enjoyable morning, being permitted to visit places which were closed to civilians. The night following we went to Collin's Music Hall, where 120 seats (stalls) had been reserved for us. The programme was one of the finest I have ever had the pleasure of listening to, an several times during the performance the audience rose and gave three ringing cheers for the men in khaki. At the conclusion Miss Kate Carney, the Coster Queen, presented each man with a good fat cigar, while the manager provided free drinks. The manager wished us to remain all night and spend a social evening, but our officers thought a good night's rest would be better for us. All the way from the theatre we were cheered until we arrived at St John's Gate, where we were dismissed at 12 pm.

It is easy to imagine the excitement for these young men, suddenly thrust, literally, into the limelight before they embarked on their great adventure. This pattern of free food and drink continued to Southampton where they boarded their ship. The ship would have had its own hospital and John Sawford's duties would have started as soon a she was on board. Going south they would have left the cold of England in January and encountered the heat of the tropics. The journey to Cape Town would have taken about three weeks.

By June 1900 more than 1,300 "Johnnies" had sailed for South Africa and in all some 1,800 served in the war. The initial tour of duty was for six months although some volunteered for longer. Generally, the Johnnies would have been posted to base hospitals to allow the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) to deal with the casualties near the battlefront. It seems that John Sawford was sent to No. 1 Field Hospital near the Orange River. It may be that he had been posted there from Bloemfontein for, on 13th March 1900, Lord Roberts had led an army into the capital of the Orange Free State. Kimberley and Ladysmith had been relieved in February and, the most famous relief of a siege, at Mafeking, was to come on 17th May.

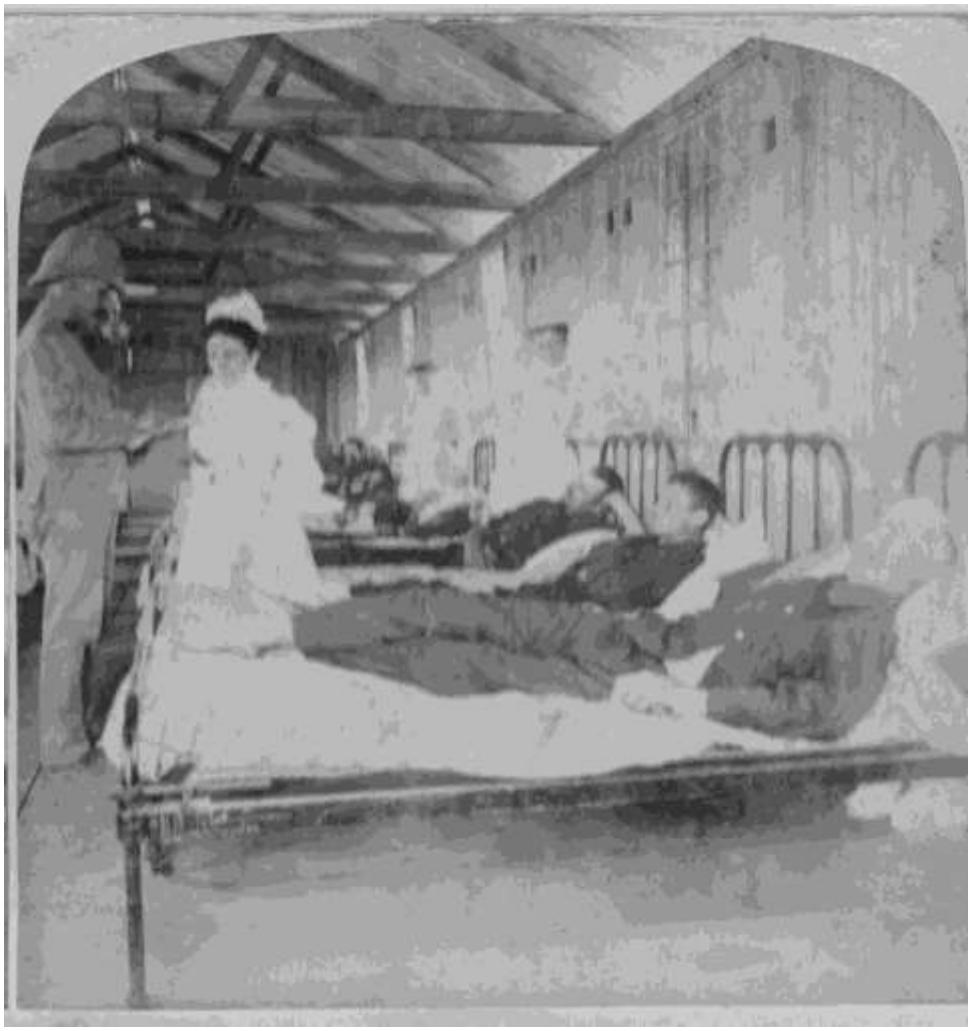
At Bloemfontein, however, the triumph quickly turned into tragedy. The British had entered unopposed but the Boers had seized the waterworks which supplied the town. As a result the British and colonial soldiers were supplied from wayside pools or any other source that could be found. The weather was hot and the water was not always boiled. As a result 'Yellow Jack' laid much of the army low. Some 6000 soldiers came down with Enteric or Typhoid fever and 1000 soldiers were buried at Bloemfontein.

A wounded soldier from the Coldstream Guards wrote home from another No 1 Station Hospital, at Wynburgh, and his letter was printed in the Cheshire Observer on Saturday January 27th 1900. In this he wrote:

Africa is a very nice country, you travel for a week and only see a mud house, and all the people have deserted from that. Tell Barney there are plenty of hares and ostriches here. We have to go two or three days sometimes before we get any water, and then we have to drink the same as we wash in.

This simple misunderstanding, or disregard, of the need for regular food and a healthy water supply by the army chiefs killed more of their own soldiers than any alleged incompetence in battle.

The hospitals could not cope, with many more suffering than there were beds available, made worse because sixty orderlies contracted the disease from the patients. At some point John moved to No 1 Field Station, which was near a railway station on the De-Aar to Kimberley line, some 14 kilometres east of Hopetown. The Orange River Bridge was three kilometres north of the station. At the outbreak of the war a garrison was established at the station under the command of Lieutenant Colonel C.G.C. Money and all mobile troops were concentrated there.



'Telling the Surgeon how the light cases are getting on. Orange River Hospital, S. Africa'.

From a Stereoview by Underwood & Underwood. (Author's own copy.)
These Stereoviews (like many war photographs) were posed and conditions may have been far more crowded and chaotic than is shown here, with some men having to lie on the floor.

Whether the Enteric Fever was brought from Bloemfontein or whether it was a separate outbreak we cannot be sure. We do know that John contracted the fever, possibly from one of his patients. The poor rations and lack of adequate safe water weakened the British troops so that they often succumbed to this virulent disease. Lying on a hospital bed, (if he had one), all the gaiety of the send-off must have seemed to John a long time ago although it was only a matter of a few months. On 30th April John died of the effects of the fever and was buried at the Field Station near the Orange River. Like William Frost Cottingham, another young man who had left Ringstead for Africa some fifteen years earlier, Africa had claimed him almost as soon as he had arrived in the "Dark Continent".

The Mercury reported on 11th May 1900 that:

> *Information reached Chief Supt. T. H. Hilton of Wellingborough on Friday [4th May] of the death at Orange River of Private Sawford who was a member of the Ringstead Division of the Wellingborough Ambulance Corps. The deceased who was about 22 years of age [sic] went out early in the campaign as a hospital orderly in company with the late Private Woodhams of Wollaston and, like him has become a victim of enteric fever. The sad news has caused a painful sensation in Ringstead where the deceased was well-known and deservedly popular.*

The article continues with a 'humorous' piece which may partly explain the reason for the spread of the disease:

> *The rank and file with Lord Methuen among whom are the Northampton [Regiment} were a short time ago temporarily forbidden to bathers and sentinels were posted to look for surreptitious swimmers. One of the sentinels caught sight of a swimmer, who persistently ignored his summons to surrender to arrest. At last the bather emerged from the river; the furious sentinel advanced upon the dripping figure and claimed a prisoner. "Confound you!" was the reply, "can't you see I'm an officer!"*

On Sunday 13th May a special service in memory of John Sawford was held in the Ringstead Wesleyan Church. The Evening Telegraph reported the next day that:

> *There was a splendid muster of the men in the Wellingborough Corps, every division being represented, and in addition to the 93 males on parade there were 15 nursing sisters present. . . The corps assembled at the Temperance Hall and proceeded direct to the chapel where an impressive service was conducted by the Rev. J. Bates. The preacher took "Duty" as his subject and in a touching reference to the late Private Sawford referred to him as one who had given his life for others. In all his letters home there was never a complaint and he always spoke highly of his comrades.*

By the end of the war, although figures vary slightly, 7,582 British soldiers had been killed in action or had died of their wounds but over 13,000 had died of disease. Interestingly officers were some 9% of those who died as a result of wounds, but they were only 3% of those who died of disease. These figures may be explained in several ways but certainly some of the Canadians who were fighting felt that treatment at a hospital was based on rank and, perhaps foolishly, tried to nurse men, who came down with the fever, in their own beds. Of the 1800 St John Ambulance volunteers some 60 died, the majority from enteric fever, which they had contracted from their patients.

The war seemed to be won by June 1900 but the Boers continued to resist, using guerrilla tactics. Kitchener, now in sole command, begins a scorched earth policy destroying the Boers' crops, livestock and farms. This led to thousands of homeless and starving women and children. Kitchener used 'concentration camps', pioneered by the Spanish in Cuba, to hold these refugees. Again figures vary but according to Professor Fransjohan Pretorius, writing in 2011 on the BBC website, by the end of the war, some 28,000 Boer women and children as well as 20,000 black people died in these camps. They did not die as a matter of policy but because of incompetence and a callous lack of care only relieved when, first the Fawcett Commission Report and then Emily Hobhouse, a campaigning Liberal, revealed the terrible conditions to the British public, and the Government finally took action. The black refugees were often forgotten (even by Emily Hobhouse) and they continued to endure terrible conditions after the camps for Boers had been improved.

The Orange River Station where John Sawford had died became the location of both white and black concentration refugee camps. The bigotry of the Boers was almost matched by the lack of care of the British.

Others did return safely from the war to Ringstead, On Saturday 19th October 1900:

> *P.C. Sullivan, who was formerly stationed in the parish previous to the calling up of the Reserve forces for South Africa, arrived by the 6.47 train at Ringstead and in addition to his wife, over 200 parishioners assembled at the station to give their highly respected officer a hearty welcome. A conveyance had been provided. The horse was taken from the shafts of the vehicle and, amidst cheers, Mr Sullivan was drawn by the villagers, accompanied by Mrs Sullivan and their two children, into the village up to his front door, where every good wish and congratulation was given him on his safe return.*

The following year, on Saturday 19th January 1900 a member of the Ringstead St John Ambulance Brigade also arrived home safely from the war. Private Chester was from Raunds but was greeted by the local Ringstead Division who, headed by a Drum and Fife band, met him at Ringstead Station and took him to a packed Temperance Hall, where he was officially greeted and thanked for his 'great and good work'. He spoke of his time in South Africa but said the he 'had never flinched'. He also expressed his regret for the loss of John Sawford. Were John Sawford's parents and siblings present or did it stir too many recent painful memories?

At the end of the *Northampton Mercury* article on the memorial service for John it states:

> *A movement is on foot and is being heartily taken up by all classes to erect some permanent memorial to Private Sawford in the parish.*

There had been a number of articles in 1893, in the Mercury, with headlines such as, "*A Village Without a Burial-Place",* for in April of that year the churchyard had been deemed full and unfit for further burials. Burials continued at Denford but there was a local outcry and a cemetery was decided upon and the land purchased and fenced. Writing in the *Northampton Mercury* on 15th June 1894, "Eye-On" in *About Town and County* wrote:

> *In passing through Ringstead the other day, I could not help noticing the pretty chapel which has been erected on the new cemetery that has just been provided on the Station-road. It is such a handsome structure and much more commodious than such buildings usually are. I understand that the graveyard is to be dedicated shortly – not consecrated – and that ministers of all denominations are to be asked to take part in the ceremony.*

John William Sawford has been remembered in a number of places across the globe. His body was moved from the Orange River Station to the West End Cemetery in Kimberley and his name put on a memorial there which is, "In Proud Remembrance of British Soldiers who were killed in action or who died as a result of service during the South African War at places commemorated on this monument". He is in a Book of Remembrance at St George's Cathedral, Cape Town and his name is recorded in Peterborough Cathedral below a stained glass window installed in 1903 in honour of those who died in the Boer War.

Memorial stone to John William Sawford on Ringstead Cemetery Chapel wall.

Author's own photograph. May 2012

In Ringstead there is a white memorial stone to John on one corner of that Cemetery Chapel, with the inscription:

GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS. THAT A
MAN LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS

Thomas Pakenham, in his book on *The Boer War*, wrote:

> *The central tactical lesson of the Boer War eluded them. The reason for those humiliating reverses was not the marksmanship of the Boers, nor their better guns or rifles, nor the crass stupidity of the British generals – all myths which British people found it convenient to believe. It was that the smokeless, long-range, high velocity, small-bore magazine bullet from rifle or machine-gun – plus the trench – had decisively tilted the balance against attack and in favour of defence*.
>
> *The world learnt this lesson the hard way*: *in the bloody stalemates of the Dardanelles and Flanders.*

Walk around the corner of the Cemetery Chapel and you will find, backing onto John's stone, is another, similar, white memorial plaque to:

> *Members of the Young People's Class*, whose companions have erected this tablet in affectionate regard.*
>
> **Wesleyan Bible Class*

On the stone are the names of five young men, the oldest twenty-three, who died in 1917 and 1918. Among them is William Sawford, son of George and Minnie who were living in Gladstone Street in Ringstead. George was Walter's brother and William was the nephew of John. William had been a soldier in the East Kent Regiment ('The Buffs'). He was killed in action and buried in the Philosophe British Cemetery at Mazingarbe, near Lens, on 24th May 1917. He was nineteen years old.

On the 17th September 1999 John W. Sawford's St John Medal for South Africa, in 'nearly extremely fine' condition, was sold at auction for £250.

> *NOTE: On Feast Sunday, September 1900 the St John Ambulance Corps from the area held a parade in Ringstead, followed by a service in the Wesleyan Chapel. A memorial tablet to Private J Sawford was unveiled inside the chapel, on the right hand side. It seems likely that this is the tablet that now is on the outside wall of the Cemetery Chapel. The same may be true of the First World War tablet which also has a Wesleyan reference. Was it moved when the chapel ceased to be used for worship?*

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Chapter Four

Sheep Lost and Found

Aaron Abbott (c1782 – 1868) and James Abbott (c1779 – 1850)

The *Northampton Mercury* for the 3rd March 1804 has an advertisement by the *Harleston Association* which is a mixture of self-congratulation and warning. It tells of a reward of £25 that it had recently paid to a shepherd for detecting who had stolen one of the lambs from his flock. This information had brought a man to justice and he had been found guilty and sentenced to be hung.

These private prosecution associations began in the eighteenth century as the old village constable system became increasingly unable to cope with the changing world. Also, for most crimes the law was still based on victims pursuing their own claims through the courts. The association members, however, paid an annual subscription and this fund was used to offer rewards and also to pay the cost of prosecution. Of course, it was only the reasonably well off who could afford to pay for this protection.

The main aim of these associations was the protection of property, especially of farm buildings, machinery, crops and livestock. As Richard Cowley, in his book *Guilty M'lud*, points out, the reward for information leading to a conviction for rick burning was £50 and for sheep stealing was £25 but for highway robbery was only £5 5s. These *Harleston Association* figures reflect the severity of the law on these offences. In Northamptonshire, in the period between 1780 and 1839, nine people were hung for murder but twelve were hung for horse or sheep theft. For the rest of the nineteenth century the only executions were for murder, with a maximum of three in any one decade.

During the eighteenth century the new wealthy classes had brought in a wide range of, often petty, offences for which the death penalty was mandatory. Known as the 'Bloody Code', some 220 offences were made punishable by death, including: 'being in the company for Gypsies for one month', 'strong evidence of malice in a child aged 7-14 years', and 'blacking the face or using a disguise whilst committing a crime'. In the countryside, 'Enclosures' and the protecting of this privatised Common land was a key driving force in the introduction of this harsh new code. Sheep replaced the medieval 'royal game' and the poacher became the new Robin Hood. The French Revolution and the sometimes violent unrest caused by agricultural depression and rapid mechanisation further increased the fears of those in power.

The *Harleston Association* was quite a newcomer, being formed in 1798 but it enjoyed the patronage of Earl Spencer who lived near the village of Harleston, at Althorp, and it quickly became one of the richest groups. The manors of Great Addington and Harleston had been tied together since the sixteenth century with the same family holding both. The advertisement in the *Northampton Mercury* had referred to a case in the previous year:

> *At the Annual Meeting of the Association, held the 23rd February instant, at the sign of the Fox and Hounds, in Harleston, in the County of Northampton, the Treasurer paid the sum of £.25 pound to John Goodman, Shepherd to Thomas Checkley, of Great Addington, in the said County, Farmer (a Member of this Association), as a Reward allowed by this Society for detecting Aaron Abbott, Shepherd to Mr Fascutt of Ringstead, in the same County, in stealing*

a Lamb from the Flock of the same Thomas Checkley, in Great-Addington Field, in the Month of March last; of which the said Aaron Abbott was convicted at the last Summer Assize held for the said County, and then condemned to be hanged.

That would appear to be that, but, like many advertisements, it does not tell the whole story. If we look back at the *Northampton Mercury* for Saturday March19th 1803 we see that Aaron Abbott was committed to the County Gaol by Thomas Carter, for stealing a lamb. In the July 16th issue we see that he was charged with the offence and was sent to the next Assizes. The following week we see that Aaron and four other prisoners 'were capitally convicted and received sentences of death'. It continues, however,' . . . **but were all reprieved before the Judges left Northampton'**.

The possibility of a 'French Revolution' in England increased fears but also persuaded the authorities to temper these terrible laws. The 'Royal Pardon' was routinely used and the judges themselves had the power to reprieve, those on whom they had so recently passed the mandatory death sentence. Nevertheless, one can imagine Aaron's time in the condemned cell, perhaps being weighed for the 'drop', and his relief at the reprieve. The *Harleston Association* wished to emphasise the worst that could happen to a sheep-stealer and did not mention Aaron's almost immediate reprieve.

The year of Aaron's crime was a significant one for, after being blocked in 1780, the parish of Great Addington was 'enclosed' in 1803 just a few months after he was sentenced. Like poaching, sheep stealing from the farmers and landowners on enclosed land or land to be enclosed, was sometimes seen as a form of protest both against enclosure and the rise of sheep farming. Aaron was a shepherd himself, however, although probably working on the Open fields. Ringstead had also successfully opposed an attempt to enclose the parish and it would not finally happen until 1841. Unfortunately the details of Aaron's case, like many others, have been lost so we cannot tell whether it was protest, poverty or greed that led Aaron to take a lamb from a neighbouring shepherd's flock. Nor do we know if it was Mr Checkley's action of summoning Aaron that led to a reprisal raid against him. Certainly, in the 2nd of June 1804 edition of the *Northampton Mercury,* the *Harleston Association* had once again to offer a reward for the apprehension of the people who entered into:

. . . the Garden belonging to, and in the Occupation of, Mr. Thomas Checkley, of Great Addington, in Northamptonshire, Farmer, (Member of the Association), and STEAL and TAKE AWAY THEREOUT a large Quantity of very fine CABBAGES; and did also STEAL and TAKE AWAY out of his Chaff-House and Stable, about THREE PECKS OF BEANS and a new RYING-SIEVE, which is branded with the letters T. C. on the Rim.

It may also have been an uncomfortable life for John Goodman, Mr Checkley's shepherd, who had reported Aaron for the theft. Look through the Parish Registers of Great Addington and the neighbouring parishes and the surname Abbott (or Abbot or Abbut) litters the pages.

Aaron had been baptised in the village church on 29th December 1782, the son of Daniel and Hannah Abbott. Daniel was from the village but he had married Hannah Percival in her home parish of Twywell on 22nd May 1775. He was described as a 'sandman' which probably meant that he worked in one of the small quarries or pits which were dotted along the Nene Valley. All their children were baptised in the Great Addington parish church. Before Aaron, had come the oldest, William (baptised 4th April 1776) and James (baptised 25th July 1779) who seems to have been the sibling to whom he was closest. After Aaron there was Sophia (baptised 31st March 1793 and buried some two weeks later on the 15th April) and then the twins Moses and Sophia (baptised 2nd August 1795). Moses too died soon after his birth (11th August).

We do not know what sentence, if any, Aaron served after his reprieve but it may be that the time that he had already served was deemed sufficient. It is possible that he then had to move to Grafton Underwood, perhaps caused by the death of his employer. Certainly a Robert Foscutt, aged 83 years who was a dealer and farmer was buried in Ringstead, on 4th August 4th 1806. We do know that at Grafton Underwood, on 1st August 1809, that Aaron married Martha Draper. Both bride and groom signed with an 'X' and Aaron's older brother, James who was one of the witnesses, also signed with an X. The other witness, who signed with his full name, was the Parish Clerk, Thomas Carley. He was a remarkable man who was born without hands but had taught himself how to write a beautiful copperplate hand by holding the pen in his teeth and had become the village schoolmaster.

Martha Draper had been baptised in Grafton Underwood on 1st August 1779, the daughter of Charles and Elizabeth Draper. Charles is variously described in the Baptismal Register as a 'weaver' and a 'pauper'. It is perhaps surprising to realise that this part of Northamptonshire once had a large cottage industry in weaving. The *Victoria History of the County of Northamptonshire* tells us that weaving was extensively carried out:

> *. . . in the district embraced by the parishes of Kettering, Rothwell, Desborough, Braybrooke, Little Bowden, and the neighbouring villages. The principle articles woven were tammies and shalloons. The former was a thin woollen material of open texture used for straining purposes; it was also made into flags, often in bright colours. The latter was made of a coarse woollen stuff.*

The textile industry was one of the first to be industrialised with Leicestershire and the West Riding of Yorkshire becoming the main areas for woollen worsted spinning and weaving factories. The weaving industry in Northamptonshire collapsed from being 11% of male employment in 1777 to just 1% in 1851. The hundreds of Rothwell, Corby, Guilsborough, Spelhoe and Huxloe (which included Great Addington) were the five main weaving areas and their populations tended to decline while those around were increasing. These out-of-work weavers flooded the agricultural employment market. Unfortunately that too declined after the Napoleonic Wars and it was only the rise of shoemaking, and, to some extent, lacemaking for the women which helped parishes such as Ringstead.

It may be that the couple moved back to Ringstead, if indeed Aaron had ever left, for all their children were baptised there. These were William Abbott who was born on 3rd March 1810 and baptised on 7th October of the same year; Thomas Draper Abbott, born 6th November 1811, baptised 1st December 1811; Esther, baptised 4th December 1817 and Elizabeth, Hannah, Esther and James baptised together on 31st December 1820. This batch baptising of families was not unusual and it seems that Esther was baptised twice but this was not a rare occurrence.

Can we picture Aaron and the cottage of his family? Of course, we cannot be sure how the families of individual shepherds and farm workers dressed and lived in Ringstead. We have no itineries of furniture in wills or at house sales. We can look at the works of writers who travelled around the country and tell of what they found, although rarely did their travels pause in Northamptonshire. William Howitt wrote *The Rural Life of England* which was published in 1838. In his chapter on "Cottage Life" he wrote:

> *When we go into the cottage of the working man, how forcibly are we struck with the difference between his mode of life and our own. There is his tenement of, at most, one or two rooms. His naked walls; bare brick, stone or mud floor, as it may be; a few wooden or rush-bottomed chairs: a deal or old oak table; a simple fireplace, with its oven beside it, or, in*

many parts of the kingdom, no other fireplace than the hearth; a few pots and pans – and you have his whole abode, goods and chattels. He comes home weary from his out-door work, having eaten his dinner under hedge or tree, and seats himself for a few hours with his wife and children, then turns into a rude bed, standing perhaps on the farther side of his only room, and out again before daylight, if it be winter. . . . he flings on his patched garments, washes his face in a wooden or earthen dish at the door; blows up the fire, gets ready his own breakfast, and is gone.

Such is the routine of his life, from week to week and year to year; Sundays and a few holidays, are white days in his calendar. On them he shaves, and puts on a clean shirt and better coat, drawn from that old chest which contains the whole wardrobe of himself and his children; his wife has generally some separate drawer or bandbox in which to stow her lighter and more fragile gear. Then he walks round his little garden, if he have it; goes with his wife and children to church or meeting; to sit with neighbour, or have a neighbour look in upon him. There he sits, his children upon his knee, and he tells them how his father used to talk to ***him.***

This is a cottage in its best estate.

Howitt acknowledged that this description was of a good father in steady employment. Many families fared worse. It is also a generalized description probably taken from a few examples but the picture in Ringstead in the first half of the century is unlikely to be very different. Howitt also touches here on what the shepherd or farm worker would have worn and here there would have been a gradual change throughout the Nineteenth Century.

When we look at images of labourers from the time we usually see long boots with knee breeches and a smock, later changing to trousers and a collarless shirt with a waistcoat, a neckerchief and wide brimmed hat. There would also usually be a coarse serge jacket. All of these items would have been much mended and patched. Apart from the boots they not would give much protection in wet weather and would have been slow to dry, although the smocks were often oiled so they would have been reasonably light in summer but, perhaps more importantly, gave some protection against the rain

It is the smock frock which usually featured in idealized pictures of rural England and indeed they were probably worn across the country although, as with many things to do with the lives of ordinary people our knowledge is still sketchy.

The working smocks were usually made of drabbet (coarse linen) and were usually beige or it seems, in some counties, including Northamptonshire, green. Most man would have a second smock in finer linen or cotton which was kept for Sunday best. The design of the smock was very economical of material with much of the pattern square cut with just the collar rounded. There would often be other layers over the shoulders and a sort of cape to give extra protection to the working smocks. Also the smocking would have given it a little shape and warmth. In the north and other industrial rural areas they disappeared more rapidly than in places such as Suffolk, Herefordshire and Wiltshire. In *North and South*, written in 1854, Elizabeth Gaskell described a small coastal town near Manchester and compared it with similar places in the south:

The colours look greyer – more enduring, not so gay and pretty. There were no smock frocks, even among the country-folk, they retarded motion and were apt to catch on machinery, and so the habit of wearing them had died out.

It is likely that in a rural industrial area like the villages and small towns strung along the Nene valley the smock also was outdated by the middle of the century. Nevertheless we do know that they were still being worn in the Ringstead area as late as 1868. In that year "James Ward was charged with stealing a smock frock, value one shilling, the property of William Knighton, in the parish of Raunds". Knighton had hung up his smock frock in his employer's hay loft from where it had disappeared. Alfred Burton, who worked in the local brickyard, bought the smock for four pence from Ward who was found guilty of the theft. This also poses the question, was Burton also intending to wear it? Certainly in a report in the *Northampton Mercury* on 21st June 1879 there was an Inquest on the body of an unknown man at Blisworth. He was said to have been wearing:

. . . old moleskin trousers, a navvy's smock and thick nailed boots.

The Mercury has many reports with references to smocks, which seemed desirable or easy items to steal, but far fewer after the middle of the century when they increasingly became just clothes for young boys. John Askham, Wellingborough's shoemaker poet, wrote in 1865 a *Sonnet – Blackberrying* which finishes:

And the stout urchin in his brown smock frock
Heedless of rents and wounds and scoldings dire,
They climb the hedge, and pluck the topmost briar

Of all farm workers, the smock was most associated with the shepherd and, on balance, it does seem very likely that, in the early years of the century, Aaron Abbott would have worn one in his daily rounds and also one for Sunday best.

Within a few years of the last baptisms of Aaron and Martha's children the couple took a decision which would change their lives forever but, first, we will look very briefly at the life of his older brother, James.

As we have seen, James was baptised on 25th July 1779 but the first we have any record of him as an adult is from a curious entry in the Great Addington Register. On the 31st January 1817 Lucy and Rebecca Abbott are christened in the parish church. The parents are set down as James and Ann. Ann is recorded as living in the village but against James is the puzzling entry, 'America' and for his occupation it has, 'Late Shoemaker'**.** What Ann's maiden name was, and if and where the couple married, has still not been found.

When we next encounter the two brothers and their families it is some six years later and they are stepping off a ship in New York harbour before going on to Upper Canada. We can only assume that James had gone ahead and checked out the new lands before his brother's family and his own followed him to the New World. Certainly there are two Land Petitions for a James Abbott in Wentworth County in Upper Canada [Ontario], in 1817 and 1819. The first petition was for a smaller town lot but these 'free lots' were often for 100 or 200 acres in the new areas which had been carved out of the virgin lands of the local peoples for the settlers by the British Government. Wherever there are straight lines on a map it usually means the boundaries have been drawn by a colonial power. In 1820 and 1821 the Government had given a 'bounty' of £10 to each emigrant to

Canada but this had been stopped although, as the *Northampton Mercury* reported on 22nd December 1821:

> *Grants of land will be given to settlers as before and they will be gratuitously furnished with husbandry implements, but nothing farther.*

After the end of the Napoleonic Wars times were very hard for most working people. The *Mercury* reported on 31st May 1817, on an area some 40 miles to the east of Ringstead, that:

> *The rage for emigration from the Isle of Ely to America has not yet subsided. Farmers, tradesmen and mechanics are continually quitting their native Isle to seek a livelihood in a distant land. A vessel went round to Wisbech for passengers and in a few days upward of 90 applications were made.*

It seems that James returned to England and collected the rest of the party before re-crossing the Atlantic with them on the *Comet.* There are a number of boats and ships named *Comet* at this time but it is likely that this *Comet* was a 250 ton single deck ship. According to the *Lloyds Register of Shipping* for 1823 it was American owned and built in about 1816. A steam-driven paddle steamer built in 1812, also named *Comet,* was working along the Clyde but steam was still in its infancy partly because of the amount of coal needed for any long voyage. Even in 1903, Scott's ship, *Discovery,* had sails as well as engines because of this problem of coal storage on a comparatively small ship.

We know that the *Comet,* under George Moore's captaincy*,* sailed from London, leaving Cowes on the Isle of Wight on December 31st and arrived in New York on 6th March 1823. Another immigrant to Canada in 1823 took seven weeks and two days to get to Quebec so this seems a long voyage but times were very dependent on the weather. It was still a perilous journey. The *Connaught Journal* on 3rd March 1823 tells of a ship, called the *Phoebe* of 370 tons being totally wrecked at Glanbeigh in County Kerry in Ireland. It was carrying timber from the New World and was the other side of the ocean but it shows the dangers of such a voyage. The advertisement in *The Times* of November 18th 1822 may give some idea of why it took so long.

> *For New York (to succeed the Acasta) and first ship, having her heavy goods on board, the fine fast sailing, American SHIP Comet, A1, coppered and copper fastened, George Moore, Commander, burden 300 tons; lying in London Dock. Here accommodations for passengers are elegant and spacious and cabin passengers are found with bedding upon the principle of the Liverpool packet ships. For freight and passage apply to Capt. Moore at the New England coffee house; to Richard Pettit, College-hill; or to Hopkins and Glover, brokers, 'Change Alley.*

This was essentially a cargo ship, also taking passengers. It may be that there were further stops along the English and perhaps the Irish and American Coasts. Also the advertisement does not mention the conditions for steerage passengers which, on a single deck ship may have been very basic. It would have been difficult and probably unpleasant voyage during the worst of the winter months, especially for Aaron and Martha with two very young children.

George Moore, the captain of the *Comet*, had been born in Littlehampton in 1792 and began his maritime career as a cabin boy. He emigrated to America in 1817 and became a captain and one of the founders of the London Line. He was a friend of the writer Washington Irving and named one of his sons after him. Unfortunately we also find that in 1825 the *Comet*, with George as the captain carried slaves along the east coast of America into the port of Savannah. The slave trade had been abolished in 1807 in much of the British Empire although not in territories run by the East India Company or in Ceylon and it was not until 1833 that slavery was finally abolished in all the Empire. In

the United States, although it was banned and attempts were made to stop the slave ships, the trade continued, and the American Civil War was fought partly over the south's unwillingness to give up slavery. In all this time the 'internal' movement of slaves along the east coast of America and the Gulf of Mexico continued. A ship called the *Comet* was taking slaves from the District of Columbia to New Orleans when it was wrecked on January 3rd 1831 on the Bahamas Bank and 164 slaves were taken to Nassau in New Providence where they were freed. Great Britain eventually paid an indemnity for these slaves. We know from the Lloyd's Register that George Moore was commander of a Comet in 1831 but it may not have been the one that was wrecked which was a 'brig'. Nevertheless it is worth seeing just what was happening in the United States at this time.

In opposing the passage of a Bill through the American House of Representatives in 1843, to pass on this 'recompense' to the slave owners who 'lost' slaves in 1831, Joshua Reed Giddings spoke movingly of what had happened:

> *We are called on to interpose the supreme power of the nation to aid the pecuniary views of certain individuals, resident in this District and vicinity, who, in 1831, entered into a commercial speculation for the purchase, exportation and sale, of a certain other portion of the population resident here and in the surrounding country. For this purpose they chartered the ship "Comet", to sail from Alexandria to New Orleans; they then made their purchases of men women and children. Here, sir, in sight of the Hall in which we are now sitting, and in full view of the "star spangled banner" which floats over this edifice, consecrated to the maintenance of our national honor and human freedom, they examined the bodies, viewed the proportions, determined upon the age, and fixed the value of fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers and children. Then came the separation. All the ties of domestic life were severed; the child torn from its parents; brothers were taken, while parents and sisters were left; the fond mother chained to the cofle and forced from her home and hearth amid the heart-rending cries of her child; while deep agony and unutterable anguish sat upon every countenance except those of the slave-dealers, who, without a pulsation of human sympathy, with whip in hand, forced their drove of "human chattels' on board the slave ship lying at yonder wharf, in plain view of the windows in front of our Hall*.

So it was on a ship which would be used for slaves two years later that the Abbotts arrived in New York. The passenger list records that James Abbot was 40 years old and his wife, Ann, was 50. James is recorded as a shoemaker. With them are their children Rebecca (17) and William (12). There is no sign of Lucy who was baptised in 1817 and William has not previously appeared in the records. The entry in the original log is very difficult to decipher and he is the same age as the William who is the son of Aaron. This is, of course, possible but it seems a little odd. It may be that this double entry is a mistake for I have found no sign of him in Canada. The full list of Aaron's family who travelled are Aaron (38), Martha (39), William (12), Thomas (10), Anna, who was christened Hannah, (9), Elizabeth (7), Esther (5) and James (3). The ages do not quite match up but this is not unusual.

The route via New York was considered the more expensive way of travelling so we can only wonder as to why the family used it. As we have seen, it may have been a cheap passage, travelling on what was essentially a cargo ship. From New York there were a number of possible routes that they could have taken. Perhaps the most likely would have been by boat up the Hudson River to Albany, then westward along the Mohawk River and Erie Canal, which, although partly built at this time, did have some sections open to traffic. Once at the shores of Lake Ontario they could have taken a sailing ship to Hamilton and Cootes Paradise. A less likely route would have been by steamer from New York around the coast and up the Hudson River, transferring to an open 'Durham' boat for the upper reaches. This boat would use a sail where possible and be 'poled' through the shallows to Lake

Ontario. Travel by boat was generally easier and safer than going overland at this time, before the coming of the railways.

James had received, on 12th November 1817, a 'town lot' at Lot 5, on the north side of Ancaster Street in Cootes Paradise, a beautiful wetland now part of the city of Hamilton on the western end of Lake Ontario. One of his descendants has told me that the family believes that he made use of his old skills and set up a boot and shoe repair business there. He did not sell this lot until 1830 so it seems probable that, on their arrival, the two families first lived in Cootes Paradise while they tried to secure land.

All these lands, of what became south Ontario, were purchased by the British from the Mississauga, originally part of the Ojibwa nation in the 1780s to give grants of land to American loyalists, (loyal to Britain), who had lost their land as a result of the American War of Independence. Recently the Canadian government has awarded some $145 million to the Mississauga as a settlement of a land claim because of the original gross underpayment in the 1790s.

Aaron, like his brother, had applied for land in Wentworth in 1824. In these petitions the applicant had to give good reasons why they should be given a free land grant. It would seem, therefore, that the two families first tried to settle in Wentworth County but then, for some reason then tried their luck in Eramosa in Wellington County. Eramosa was, at that time, mainly occupied by military officers and British loyalists from the United States although a new wave of immigrants was beginning. The name, 'Eramosa', as the Reverend William Barrie pointed out, when opening the new Presbyterian Church in 1861, *has a 'sonorous ring'* but:

> *It is said to be the name given to it by the Indians and in their language it means a dead dog.*

What would the two Abbott families have found, in this part of Upper Canada, different to their home in Ringstead? Eramosa would have had a similar population but instead of the closely packed 'ring village' there would have been straight tracks with log houses strung along them. The land would have been largely forested with rocky outcrops and swamps. After the beautiful, but homely Nene Valley it would have seemed a vast, awe-inspiring country with the limestone outcrops shimmering in the River Eramosa.

The weather would have not been so different to England but with drier winters and snow rather than rain, with little springtime, and hot summers, dry but with a sapping humidity, which parched the land until the arrival of the Autumn rains in October and November. In 1846, Wm. H, Smith produced, as he states, the first Canadian Gazetteer. He notes:

> *Much has been written against, and strange notions are prevalent in Britain respecting the climate of Canada. Most persons on the other side of the Atlantic imagine that the winter is so severe, and the snow so deep, that it is impossible for any one to stir out of doors without being wrapped up to their eyebrows in furs or woollens; nor even without the risk of being frozen to death, or lost in the snow. This is a very erroneous idea. . .*

Of course Smith was trying to 'sell' Canada and perhaps underplays both the humid summer heat which Elysia DeLaurentis, at the Wellington Museum and Archives, assures me can often get into the high 80s Fahrenheit. He also downplays the 'ague; which apparently the British were concerned about, comparing it to judging the healthiness of the climate of England by the Fens. Nevertheless at this time the area of Upper Canada would have had swamp and forest and mosquitoes and black fly would have been a constant irritation and danger to the Abbotts during May especially. Even today the insects can make it almost impossible to work outside without proper protection, (and we have

not mentioned the horseflies and deerflies). In northern Ontario they still wear hats with netting draped down over their heads to protect as much tender skin as possible. In the 1950s, Canadian singer Wade Hemsworth recorded a song called, *The Blackfly Song,* which has the chorus:

> *And the black flies, the little black flies,*
>
> *Always the black fly no matter where you go;*
>
> *I'll die with the black fly a-pickin' my bones,*
>
> *In North Ontar-i-o-i-o, In North Ontar-i-o-i-o.*

There are land petitions for both James and Aaron in Eramosa in 1829. James was granted 100 acres by the Crown on 17th August 1829 but on 9th October of the same year he sold it again, to Thomas Brown. We will look, later, at the possible reason for this sudden sale. For Aaron, however, this was the end of his journey.

In *Here and There in Eramosa* Frank Day tells us that:

> *. . . the story is told locally that the couple reached Lot seventeen about dusk. Tired with their travel, it is said that they spent their first night on the new farm sleeping on the ground beside a fallen maple tree.*

Aaron was granted 200 acres, a huge area by Ringstead standards. This did not mean, however, that the land was his. In order for this to happen he first had to build a house at least 20 ft. by 16ft in size and live there for two years. He also had to level half a road in front of his property and clear, cultivate and fence ten acres of the land. *Emigration Handbooks* were produced each year for the emigrants, although many would not have been able to read them. The one for 1820 makes it clear that these first years would be very hard but for those who persevered it could lead to real prosperity.

> *If the emigrant farmer should be poor, he will have difficulties to encounter in establishing himself. Arrived at his land, he will have no shelter till he erects his house; he then cuts down trees and clears his ground of brushwood &c. by fire. By degrees he ameliorates his land, obtains shelter for his cattle &c. Enterprising men who have courage to surmount difficulties, will in the end do very well, as thousands have done.*

John Harris, an Irishman from Cork wrote a diary of his life between 1811 and 1830. In 1820 he arrived in Eramosa just a few years before the Abbotts. The brief entries there give some indication of the day-to-day chores that would have made up much of the settlers' lives. In May 1822 he records:

16 *Ephraim Conroy with me chopping*
17 *Wm Smith Snr with me chopping*
18 *Wm Smith Snr with me burning brush*
20 *Chopping*
23 *with J. Ramsey chopping*
24 *Wm Smith with me chopping. J Ramsey went out.*
25 *Rolling*
27,28 *Burning*
29 *Made L. Ramsey a pair of shoes*

30 Cutting potatoes. Adolphus Armstrong arrived and stopped all night
31 Made garden
1 June Planting corn

He was also walking 15 to 20 miles on many occasions for provisions, friendship or business. The shoe-making which punctuates his diary was obviously a sideline that helped supplement his income until he sold his crops – or ate them.

Aaron did have the help of his two older sons, and perhaps his other children as they grew up. His neighbours, too, would have helped him build his first 'shanty', a small log dwelling without windows, as he and his family would be expected to help others. Later a more permanent 'house', with windows, would be built. The first of these house 'raisings' in Eramosa was recalled many years later in the *Guelph Evening Mercury,* by the son of John Ramsey:

> *The first log house put up in the Township is still standing on Mr. John Ramsey's farm. It was raised in 1823 and took the united strength of every man in the township – twelve in all – to put it up, assisted by three gallons of whiskey, which Mr Ramsey carried on his back from Dundas Street, for the occasion.*

Even so, it was not until 1836 that Aaron was able to prove to the Land Agent that he had done all that was necessary and the 'grant' was signed over to him. It is possible that some of the family worked in the neighbourhood, to provide money or goods, until the farm was a going concern.

Writing of the nearby township of Puslinch, Charles Callfas tells of the winter of 1842 when the snow was on the ground from November until May so that not a, ' fence nor stump could be seen'. He goes on to tell of his father who:

> *. . . built a shanty about sixteen feet square which housed eighteen persons for several months when a second one was erected. Trees were hewn down, burned or sold for almost nothing. They used the hoe for a plough, covered the grain by scratching it with brush and cut it with a sickle. He stated that bears were numerous and bold. Even in daylight they could come looking in the windows and often steal little pigs out of the pen. The cattle defended the sheep against the wolves. At night oxen would lie down a distance apart and the sheep would get between them for safety.*

Young people usually adapt quickly to new surroundings but for the Abbott children, although it must have been a wonderful playground when freed from work, it would also have been, at times, a frightening place. Another early Eramosa settler, Lazarus Parkinson, later told of the wolves from a young boy's perspective:

> *Our cattle running in the woods were chased home by the wolves two or three times during the winter. The wolves would pursue the cattle as the shades of evening were gathering thick and gloomily in the deep recesses of the forest, close up to the clearing, and then the whole pack would set up a dreadful howl. Night coming on with its darkness rendered more gloomy by the thick woods that surrounded our dwelling at no great distance, the winds sighed mournfully in the tree-tops, and the thrilling, piercing, doleful howl of the wolves, caused a strange feeling to pass through the minds of us boys and made us creep close to our big fire, and sit quietly watching its red-glowing coals, its bright blaze ever varying in form and color, wondering to ourselves why wolves should howl so hideously.*

The two Abbott couples were older than the usual pioneers and James was older than his brother. Also while Aaron had been a shepherd, James had worked as a shoemaker. It seems that Aaron was able to build a good life in Eramosa but that James, for whatever reason, was not able to take advantage of the free agricultural land.

At some stage James and Ann moved to Trafalgar Township, Halton County, west of Toronto, which has now been amalgamated into the town of Oakville. There is a gravestone in the Palermo United Cemetery in Oakville, which records the deaths of the couple. At the bottom it states that Ann died on 19th October 1829, aged 66 years. This is just ten days after the sale of his land in Eramosa and it is possible that with Ann sick he realised that he would not be able to manage the land. I think that Ann's age may be a mistake for Ann was fifty when they were on the Comet in 1823 and, looking at her husband's and children's ages, fifty-six would seem more likely.

Perhaps, because of her death, James also sold his town lot in Cootes Paradise. There is an Indenture of Bargain and Sale, dated 1830:

> *. . . from James Abbott to Allan Napier MacNabb for 3/5 of an acre, lot 8, south side of Ancaster St. In the town of Cootes Paradise.*
>
> *[Allan Napier MacNabb made his fortune in property speculation and later became the Canadian Prime Minister.]*

The same gravestone records that James died on 24th December 1850 aged 71 years and 6 months. Next to this grave is another small stone which records the burial of Jane Abbott, 'Relict [widow] of James Abbott, in her sixtieth year, on September 28th [8 not clear] 1857 [could be 1851], Native of Brixton'. It seems that James re-married after the death of Ann. I have not managed to find James or Jane's marriage or them in residence together. There is no Brixton in Canada so presumably it is the area of London that this refers to but does this mean that she had not lived long in Canada? James's apparently hidden life is probably just a result of him moving from place to place.

In contrast to James, Aaron had settled for life in Eramosa and the 1833 Census of the Township records his household as:

> *Abbott, Aaron, 3 males (16+): 1 male (0-16): 3 females (16+)*

Aaron is shown again on the same 'project' in 1837-8. By then, of course, he had made the land his own. By 1851 he is seventy years old and recorded as a 'Gentleman' which means that he was not having to work for a living. With him and Martha is their son James (30) with his wife Mary Ann and their four children. His oldest son, William had married Martha Black who was born in Ireland and may have been a relative of James Black (although he was from Scotland) who had founded the Everton *Church Disciples of Christ*. Most of the younger Abbotts seem to have become members of this local church but Aaron and Martha, as well as their youngest son, James, retained their old allegiance to the Church of England.

The Agricultural Census of 1851 confirms that Aaron is still on the farm with his son James and it also fills in some of the details of what they were growing on their joint holding of 200acres. They had 80 acres under cultivation with 50 of these under crops, (Aaron had 6 ¾ and James 8 acres of this under wheat), and 30 under pasture. There were still 120 acres 'under wood or wild'. It seems likely that father and son ran the lots as one farm.

On the 26th December 1852 Martha died. The couple had decided that they would be buried on the spot where they had spent that first night on their lot, beside the fallen maple tree, and accordingly she was laid to rest there and a headstone erected.

In the 1861 Census Aaron is still living on the lot with his son James and his wife and family. The land records show that the farm was sold in 1863, perhaps so that he could leave something to all his children, although in 1867 he is still listed as living on Concession 6 Lot 17 as a freeholder, with his son William farming beside him on Lot 15. It may be, therefore, that it was on Aaron's death that the house was sold

Aaron lived long enough to have become recognized as one of the fathers of the township and in May 1866 he would have read, or had read to him, the reminiscences of other early settlers in the Guelph Evening Mercury. He was mentioned several times but, for whatever reason, never offered his own memories for publication. Through these articles, from which we have already quoted, we get some idea of their tough self-reliant lifestyle. We read of privation, hazardous journeys, crossing dangerous swollen rivers, and people surviving against the odds. The Reverend William Barrie summed it up when he spoke at the opening of the new Presbyterian Church in 1861:

> *It was no easy matter for the first settlers to get along. They had for years hard toiling and many privations. There was no grist mill nearer to this quarter than Esquesing or Waterloo, which was 23 miles off; and it generally took three or four days to go with a grist of eight bushels to there and come home again. Dundas was the nearest market, and it often took about a week to there and come home again; and the teamster had sometimes to lodge with his oxen in the forest all night. There were cases in which men carried the wheat (about a bushel) on their backs to the grist mill in Waterloo. In some families the wheat was boiled and made food of in that way; but the consequence was dysentery, this led to the use of coffee mills for grinding the wheat. For years no settler had anything to sell, and a York shilling was scarcely ever seen in any person's possession.*

Aaron died on 13th June 1868, aged 86 years. It is said that he was buried alongside Martha. We know that their farmland burial plot had a monument surrounded by a four-foot high stone fence enclosing an area six feet by eight feet. It is told by Frank Day, however, that Aaron's name was never put on the headstone. In the 1940s the Ontario government ordered the closure of these farm burial plots and the removal of the remains to recognised cemeteries. So it was that the grave marker was moved to the local Everton Cemetery and it is there today. It records:

In Memory of
MARTHA ABBOTT
Who Departed This
Life December 26 1852
Aged 73 years

Below this, now partly worn away, are four lines of text from Psalm 106:

Happy are they, and only they
Who from thy judgement never stray.
Who know what's right, not only so,
But always practice what they know.

Was Aaron's name missed off by some oversight or did he remember a 'strayed' lamb some 65 years earlier and decide to not have his own name set there?

Abbott family tradition has it that Aaron had either given to, or helped his eldest son, William, to buy, the farm next to his own while another son, James managed and lived on the home farm. It is also believed in the family that Aaron left the farm to William's eldest son also called Aaron with the stipulation that he should pay each of his grandchildren $100 when they reached 21 years of age.

Aaron's will is given in the petition papers entered into the Surrogate Court of Wellington on 20th June 1868. It first gives a list of Aaron's assets:

Bedding an Furniture of about the value of	*$ 21*	*00*
Notes of hand amounting to	*1034*	*00*
Also cash in hand	*27*	*22*
43 lbs of wool value at	*10*	*74*
	1102	*96*

It also goes on to give power to his executors to sell off his goods, pay off his debts and funeral expenses and then to distribute the residue as follows:

> *To my son William the sum of One Dollar – To my son James the sum of One Dollar. To my daughter Elizabeth the sum of One Hundred Dollars and to my granddaughter Martha Talbot Forrester the sum of One Hundred Dollars and the remainder to be divided as equally as they can between my Daughter Hannah and the aforesaid Elizabeth and my Daughter-in-law Mary Abbot wife of my son James share and share alike – and the same to be divided within four years after my decease.*

His grandson, also Aaron, was one of the executors, and it seems likely that the land and house had been given to some of his male heirs before his death. Otherwise this will would seem to have been a blow to them. Nevertheless, his son, James, ceased to be a freeholder and the 1871 Census shows him still living with his wife and 8 children in Eramosa but now recorded as a 'labourer'. His older children are 'farm servants' or 'servants'. At the wedding of his son William on 2nd April 1874, it states that it took place at 'the residence of James Abbot Lot 7, 5th (or 3rd) line Eramosa', which was just across the railway line from the small town of Rockwood. It may be that by this time James was renting a house with just an acre or two of land, with access onto the 5th line (or driveway). At first, the regimented, straight lines of the New World driveways and roads would have seemed alien to the Abbotts after the Ringstead lanes which had followed the history of the land.

The couple stayed in Rockwood where James worked as a labourer on the railroad. James and Mary Ann both died in 1894 and are buried in the town of Durham.

Here and There in Eramosa records of the Abbotts:

> *. . . the family was influential and widely known in Eramosa as shown by the municipal records and they were particularly noted for vocal and instrumental musical ability*, which they applied generously for the welfare of the local churches and organizations. They were connected with most of the older families of the township by descent or marriage.*

*[*Note: At the baptism of his daughter Mary on 20th October 1822, at Great Addington, a Charles Abbott was described as 'Labourer, Carpenter and Musician.' Music seems to have been in the Abbott genes.]*

For Aaron and his family their lives as pioneers in the Eramosa area must have meant hard, unremitting work but they built a new life there and became some of the leading citizens of the new community.

Afterword.

Surprisingly, perhaps, an earlier Addington Abbott's life followed a similar pattern to Aaron's. Giles Abbott of Little Addington was committed to gaol, on 17th November 1800, charged with stealing a 'stirk heifer' from Elizabeth Fortescue of Thurning. In February of the following year he was found guilty at the Assizes and sentenced to death but was reprieved before the judges left Northampton. His son, also Giles, emigrated to Australia in 1836 and Giles senior with his wife, Hannah followed him a year later. They too seem to have become pillars of their new community and one member of the family, Jacob, became a prominent local pastor.

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Chapter Five

Village Constables

John Pengilly, Henry Packer, Joseph Balderson, Edward Stones,
Elias Brown, John Skelly, John Puttnam, Frederick Sullivan

The post of village constable has a long history. From the time of Edward I each parish had had to appoint two constables each year. These appointments became the nomination of the 'Vestry Committee', (they met in the vestry of the church), which was made up of the local gentry. The post of constable was not one that many men wanted as there was no formal wage and it could be a time-consuming job. Some men, who could afford it, paid others to take on the role. It was also a job unlikely to make a man popular among his fellow villagers. He would have to place accused people in the stocks, or in the lock up, or, if there was nowhere else suitable locally, in his own house.

The familiar truncheon became a weapon and symbol of office. By the early nineteenth century most parishes would have five or more constables and, in the rural areas the post lasted well into the nineteenth century.

Times were changing, however, and the Gordon Riots in London in 1780 and the Peterloo Massacre in Manchester in 1819 made the authorities, somewhat unwillingly, accept that the army was not the best force to keep public order. The Gordon Riots accelerated the formation of the Metropolitan Police. The Peterloo Massacre, where the military broke up an illegal gathering so violently that eleven people were killed and several hundred injured, began the movement for a national civilian police force.

Already, in 1828, a Select Committee on Criminal Committals and Convictions noted:

> *. . . in the Agricultural counties, the business of detection is often left to a village constable who is perfectly unfit to deal with any but village crimes.*

The parish constable, was also responsible for short measures (in shops etc), bastardy orders and, it seems, practically anything that went wrong. Earlier than this Select Committee, an article, taken from 'an agricultural publication' was printed in the Northampton Mercury on 30th August 1822. It reveals the bigotry of the times but also the low opinion some people had of the constable.

> *I believe the generality of Gipsies to be ignorant, and hardened, and wicked enough for any crime. . . And although Mr. Constable swears that there are no gipsies in his parish to his knowledge, and nobody sells by false weights and measures to his knowledge, yet he knows that he has sworn to a lie: he knows that the publican sells by a little white mug about three quarters of a pint; but as long as it passes with the magistrate all is right, and he 'only does as the other constables do'. - (I have been one myself, Sir, so I know what they do.)*

The fear engendered by the 'Swing Riots' in the 1830s in the rural areas also helped lead finally, in 1839, to the *County Police Act* which allowed county magistrates at Quarter Sessions to adopt powers to create local forces, but with no central government funding. Some counties resented both the interference with the old system and the costs involved but Northamptonshire was one of the earliest to take up this option. The Northampton Borough Police had already been formed in 1835

and in 1840 the County Constabulary followed. The first Chief Constable was Henry Goddard, an ex Bow Street Runner.

The new system used much of the terminology of the old, and as the two ran side-by-side for a number of years it can be a little confusing. The Northampton Mercury for the 7th July 1832 had reported that:

> *Mr. Richard Freeman of Ringstead was sworn into office as Chief Constable for the Hundred of Higham Ferrers: in the room of Mr. Joseph Walker, deceased.*

Richard Freeman was a wealthy local farmer who declares in the 1851 Census for Ringstead that he is a farmer of 270 acres, employing seven labourers. He is obviously part of the old system but even in 1872 at the Petty Sessions on April 15th we see that William Bull, a shoemaker and grocer, and, Charles Robinson, shoemaker and shoe agent, are sworn in as constables for Ringstead. The constables made an application for an increase in the fee allowed for expenses for attendance but were told this was a matter for the Justices at the Quarter Sessions. This is obviously still part of the old system still continuing. The 1839 Act did specifically allow the Justices of the Peace to appoint 'special constables' to supplement the professional police force, if needed, and it these that continued the old Parish Constable system. Many saw this change to a centralised professional police force as an attack on the liberties of England. A 'Rugbaean' wrote a one act play, published in 1840, called *John Bull and the Rural Police* which ended with the cast singing a song to *The Old English Constable:*

> *Yet all at length must bend to fate, so borne along the tide,*
> *A victim to Reform at last a sudden death he died.*
> *And while o'er England's liberties new laws and fashions ride,*
> *Alas! I fear our country's peace lies buried by the side*
> *Of a fine Old English Constable, one of the olden time.*
>
> *For times and seasons now are changed, old customs pass away,*
> *No longer English hands and hearts will prove old England's stay;*
> *Gendarmerie will henceforth be the order of the day,*
> *And we shall think on with regret the former happy sway*
> *Of the fine Old English Constables, all of the olden time.*

What qualifications did these new police constables have to possess? The Act specified that they must be:

> *. . . under forty years of age; to stand five feet seven inches without shoes; to read and write and keep accounts; to be free from any bodily complaints, of strong constitution and generally intelligent.*

He also could not have certain jobs such as servant, gamekeeper or innkeeper and must have 'a certificate of character to be signed by one or more respectable persons'.

We are told that the constable was to receive not less than 15s and not more than £1 1s a week. For clothing he was to be supplied with:

> *First year, one great coat, cape to ditto, badge to ditto, coat, badge to ditto, two pair of trowsers [sic?], one pair of boots, one pair of shoes, hat, stock. Second year, one coat, badge to ditto, one pair of trowsers, one pair of boots, one pair of shoes, hat. The supply for the*

third year will be the same as for the first year, and for the fourth the same as the second, and so on for successive periods.

In the Northamptonshire Constabulary the original uniform would have been a ten-buttoned single-breasted, blue coat, grey trousers with a leather belt containing cases for handcuffs and staff and a plain black top hat. It was not the most practical uniform for chasing felons down country lanes.

The constable was also to be supplied with a staff, (I have not seen it in any reports called a truncheon) and, perhaps more surprisingly, in some circumstances, with a small cutlass. Again I have never seen a cutlass referred to in any reports for Northamptonshire.

The Constables had a long day, for the Chief Constable, on 13th June 1840, extending the hours that had been laid down in an order made less than three weeks earlier, stated that the constables would go on duty at 5 am until 10 am and then patrol from 7 pm until the beer houses are closed or longer if necessary. They were also to watch out particularly for vagrants pitching their tents and remove them.

The first newspaper article that I have found which refers to the new police in Ringstead is to a Police Constable Tuckey who brought a charge against Thomas Whittering and William Cobley for being drunk and disorderly. The case was heard at Wellingborough Petty Sessions on Wednesday 7th February 1844. It is a case, that we have dealt with in an earlier biography, relating to young William Cobley who was so drunk that he believed that he could move the earth off its axis.

It seems clear at this point that the constable was not based in Ringstead for in another case, where William Wagstaffe was charged of stealing two rabbits belonging to Thomas Bayfield's son, Police Constable Tuckey *went* to Ringstead. When charged with the offence, William said that he had found the rabbits and that:

. . . they were in a pie and the skins were in the cupboard.

At first Ringstead was in the Wellingborough Division under Superintendant Luke Knight and the nearest constable was in Raunds. In 1849 the Superintendant took charge of a District and under him there would be two or three Divisions run by the new rank of Inspector.

We do not know exactly when Police Constable Tuckey left but it was before 1849 when the original Personnel Register was re-written and only officers then serving were included. John Pengilly joined the force on 1st November 1849 and we find him, on the 27th January 1851, according to the *Northampton Mercury,* as 'the police officer stationed at Ringstead' Later events lead us to doubt that this is strictly correct in that the 1851 Census has him living at Higham End, Raunds. The case is about William Knighton of Raunds keeping his licensed house open, 'after the hour of ten o'clock' and John 'proved' the offence.

Living with John in Higham End was his wife Sarah and son William John. Perhaps, surprisingly, John and his family are from Ashburton in Devon and we may wonder what brought them to Northamptonshire. Of course, we should not be too surprised because the life stories that we have followed throughout the century have shown us that village life was not the stable, settled affair that we sometimes imagine. This was particularly true of those who followed the new 'professions' of National School teacher, station master or police constable. The old constable system relied on the village looking after itself. Under the new service the rule was to appoint from without and to move men before they got too comfortable.

John was the son of John and Susanna Pengilly (the spelling varies) and was baptised in Ashburton on 12th March 1819. Ashburton is an inland parish of Devon which had grown to prosperity through agriculture, tin mining and the wool industry. Throughout the nineteenth century, however there was emigration from Devon and Cornwall. In the 'Hungry Forties', agriculture was depressed and this was worsened by the impact of potato blight in the 1845–7 period. In Ashburton, the serge and blanket manufacturing industry was an important employer and this was also in rapid decline. The town had 3,080 inhabitants in 1801 and 4,165 in 1831 but by 1841 it had decreased to 3,841 and this decline continued throughout the nineteenth century so that by 1901 the population was only 2,628. These were hard times in the area. Pam Ferris, the actor, in a series for BBC Wales found out that her great-great-grandfather, Richard Perkins, in desperation, had walked with his eight children from north Devon to Aberkenfig, near Bridgend in Wales.

Many young men and women, would have been forced to leave the area in order to seek work. It was also at this time that John's mother died and his father remarried so, perhaps, events at home may have also provided a reason for John to seek a new career as a police constable in Northamptonshire. There was, however, a more compelling reason why John came to Northamptonshire. He had been a member of the South Devonshire Railway Company Police which had been disbanded in 1849. The new Chief Constable of Northamptonshire, Henry Bayly, looking for more constables for his force went to Devon to actively recruit these experienced men and ten former railway policemen came to the county as a result. In the event, the idea was not a great success, for four men left in the first year and within six years all had left the force.

In 1841 John, like his father was an agricultural labourer in Ashburton. By 1851 his father had remarried and was a land drainer in Ashburton but Police Constable John Pengilly and his family were living in Raunds.

How did John fare in rural Northamptonshire? Ringstead had quite a strong dialect and John would have had a broad Devon accent. One can imagine that the wags outside the pubs at closing time would have found his accent irresistible. I have only found the one case where John is named but it is probable that he did come across a Ringstead resident whose activities pepper the pages of the *Northampton Mercury* court reports. The Saturday May 31st 1851 issue list those, 'Committed to the County Gaol and House of Correction' and includes:

> *Korah Dicks for one month for using a gun for killing game at Ringstead and for one month for assaulting a police-constable at Ringstead.*

It is likely that John was not long in Ringstead for his daughter was born, in 1854, in Long Buckby, another shoemaking village with some reputation for disorder. It is logged in the *Personnel Register* that John received five punishments, was injured once on duty and had just one favourable report. It also records that he was dismissed on 15th April 1855. Unfortunately no reasons are given and this lack of detail is typical of the *Register.*

By 1861 John Pengilly and his family are living in Salisbury Terrace in Islington and he is an Inspector at a Railway Coal Depot. It seems that John tried to start up his own business as a corn dealer but the London Gazette for 29th December 1868 lists him as a 'Bankrupt to surrender at Basinghall Street'. It states that he is late of Copenhagen Street but, in the 1871 Census he is still there, in Islington, and has been reduced to, 'coal heaver'. He is fifty years old and he is dead before he is sixty. It seems that the years had not been kind to John.

We saw, in an earlier biography of Korah Dicks, that it was parish constable Samuel Figgis who landed in trouble for allowing Korah to get drunk before delivering him to the Northampton Gaol in

1855. Also, Joseph Dearlove and William Beeby are sworn in as parish constables at the Wellingborough Petty Sessions of April 11th 1856. The remnant of the old system still had a role to play in Ringstead in supporting the new police force. It was also in 1856 that the County and Borough Police Act was introduced which stated that the acceptance of a fully manned, centrally inspected, efficient police force would be rewarded with government funding of one quarter of the cost. There was again opposition on grounds of cost and also of local democracy, as the county police forces were still under the administration of the Quarter Sessions whereas the borough forces were governed by elected (by the few) representatives.

Many of the local constables must have been involved in investigations following the disappearance of Lydia Attley in 1850 and the discovery of a body and the aborted trial of William Weekley Ball in 1864. The investigation was taken over by their superiors. The Chief Constable, Captain Bayley, Superintendant Noble and Inspector Williamson were present at the Inquest on the supposed body of Lydia.

Unknown Constable in Northamptonshire County Constabulary. Pre 1870

© Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police (Northamptonshire Police Archives)

In 1860, the new Division of Thrapston had been formed which took pieces from Oundle, Kettering and Wellingborough. This was part of the enlargement of the force following a report by the new Police Inspectorate, formed in 1856, which had found the county greatly undermanned. A new Thrapston Police Station was built with living accommodation for the Divisional Inspector and the town Constable as well as the police offices and Magistrates Court Room.

By 1860 the uniform had changed to a blue, knee length eight-button frock coat with no pockets and blue trousers. The hat had now been reduced from a top hat to a more serviceable bowler type with a metal badge.

It is not clear who looked after Ringstead in the period after John Pengilly left but on 1st June 1863 Henry Packer joined the Wellingborough Division. He was 27 years old and 5 ft 8¾ inches tall. John Pengilly had been 5 ft 9½ inches tall and all the Ringstead constables were above the average height for the time.

P.C. Henry Packer became responsible for Ringstead although it does not appear that he was actually living there. It was he, who, on the 22nd August 1865, found Odd Dicks, one of Korah's sons, sitting on a stolen mangold wurtzel, under a hedge, at the side of a farmer's turnip field.

Henry was the son of a tailor, born in about 1836 in Long Buckby, but living with his family in Helmdon. He seems to have been something of a trouble-shooter, going into villages to sort out 'hot spots'. In 1863 and 1864 he appears in a number of cases in Finedon, in 1865, as we have seen at Ringstead, and in 1867 and 1868 he gives evidence in cases at Easton, Collyweston, Raunds and Thrapston, where it is said that he is stationed. He appears to have been something of a high flyer because in 1861 he was a police constable in Chalfont St. Peter in Buckinghamshire and by 1871 a Police Inspector in Towcester.

There was a hierarchy of police constables, although rarely referred to in the newspaper reports. In the early years, when a constable first joined the police force he would be referred to as a 'third class constable'. He would receive some simple training and would be sent out into the streets and lanes. In the beginning it was considered that it would take some four years to become a second-class constable and then, if his conduct was appropriate, he would be upgraded to a first class constable after another five years. In fact these periods were soon condensed and Henry was promoted to a Second Class Constable on 1st January 1864, to First Class on 1st January 1866, to Merit Class on 1st April 1867, to Sergeant, Second Class on 1st February 1869 and Inspector on 1st February 1870. A meteoric rise! Surprisingly he had two punishments and no favourable reports. On 30th September 1874 he resigned, probably to become Master of the Towcester Union Workhouse

Certainly, the 1881 Census shows Henry in that capacity and he continued there until his retirement. He died on October 6th 1905 aged 70 years and was buried in Towcester Cemetery.

We see other police constable's names in connection with Ringstead. In September1865 Police Constable, George Arnold, who was almost certainly based in a neighbouring parish, brings a case against W. Dicks for drunkenness, abusive language and disturbing the peace. It was, as usual at this time, near the *Swan Inn*.

It seems that there was no single officer responsible for Ringstead and that the first police constable to be actually stationed there was Joseph Balderson. Our introduction to him is when one of the locals accuses his Inspector of assault. In his evidence at the trial, Joseph states that he had been at Ringstead, 'during the last fortnight', so we must assume that he had started his duties there on or around the 27th July 1868. He says that he was only temporarily placed at Ringstead which, he adds:

Was memorialised for in consequence of the riotous conduct of some of the inhabitants.

Some of the villagers did not welcome a police constable into their midst. On the other hand, as Joseph said, many villagers had actively sought to have a constable stationed in the village. At the Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions in July 1868:

> *A memorial from the inhabitants of Ringstead, praying for a police-constable to be stationed at the parish has been heard before the committee. . . The Chief Constable states that with his present force he cannot permanently place any police constable at Ringstead.*

One wonders if this was a punishment posting for Joseph for he had been promoted to Constable First Class but on 20th April 1868 he had been reduced back to Constable Second Class. He had been born in Spratton in Northamptonshire in1844, the son of a farm labourer. In the 1861 Census he was twenty-one years old and still living at home with his parents. Like his father he too was a farm labourer. Most of the early police constables appointed came from agricultural labouring backgrounds and this was true even of the Metropolitan areas.

On August 4th 1868 at around 11 pm Joseph, pounding his new beat, was outside the *Black Horse* when he heard a loud noise coming from the other end of the High Street, near the *Swan Inn*. He found twenty or thirty young men collected there and he asked them to go home as the noise had, 'aroused the neighbours'.

At this same time, by coincidence it seems, Superintendant Noble and Inspector Williamson had been driving in a gig on the road from Addington to Ringstead. As they were coming up the road from Ringstead Station to the village they heard the noise of a 'drunken party'.

Alfred Wilson was one of those men outside the Swan Inn. According to his testimony he had been score keeping at a local cricket match and it was about ten o'clock at night. His cottage was at the bottom of the Swan Yard and he was talking to several men who were on their way to night harvest work. He said that Inspector Williamson came up and demanded why he had not gone home. Alfred alleged that:

> *The defendant [Inspector Williamson] attacked me with a stick inflicting several bruises. He followed me all the way to my home, beating me as he went.*

Thomas Smith, Joseph Cobley and Lemuel Lockie all supported Alfred's version of events, except the time which they said was near to 11 o'clock. Thomas Smith, (possibly another man) who lived at the Swan Inn saw from his window:

> *The defendant was striking complainant with a stick and Superintendant Noble was hitting him with a whip.*

Lemuel Lockie who also saw the incident from his window which overlooked the Swan Yard testified that there were:

> *Two or three men in the yard, but there was no disturbance.*

Alfred told the court that on the following day the doctor had called on him. Unfortunately the doctor could not be present at the trial because he was attending a patient. Was this the truth or did the good doctor not wish to appear on the 'wrong' side? In evidence, the three police officers stated that they had not seen or carried out any assault. Inspector Williamson had concluded that the men

were displeased by the temporary appointment of a policeman in the parish and that Wilson had said:

> *We will have no ------ bobbies here.*

The Bench considered that there was no evidence of the defendant having used 'more violence than was necessary in supporting the law' and the case was dismissed.

The local drinkers must especially have resented this temporary policeman among them. On 11th October 1868 P.C. Balderson discovered Joseph Baker on Sunday afternoon:

> *. . . lying on a public footpath in the village in a state of intoxication and fast asleep. His dress was discomposed.*

Baker flatly denied the charge but was fined just 1s. with costs as it was his first offence.

The Northampton Mercury of 9th January 1869 report of the Quarter Sessions that the Police Committee had proposed an increase in the force by four constables. One of these was because:

> *Great complaints there were at Ringstead and the chief constable placed a man there temporarily, but from his reserved force at Northampton. The committee had been informed that a great improvement had taken place since the constable was stationed there.*

The permanent increase in the force was agreed and Joseph continued in his post at Ringstead.

On 18th February 1869 Joseph was on duty at 12 o'clock at night at the 'top end of the village'. He heard a loud noise and found James Cope and Joseph Cobley (a witness in the first case), 'kicking up a disturbance'. He asked them to go home but they refused, sneering:

> *. . . they didn't care a - - - - - for old Balderson.*

Mr. Henry, defending protested that:

> *. . . the defendants had been at work all day and were simply going home quietly after a glass of ale.*

Again the loyal shoemakers came out as witnesses. George Cole and Thomas Roberts gave evidence that they had been at the *Swan Inn* with the defendants and that they had drunk little. Joseph Balderson had abused them without provocation. Needless to say, they were found guilty and fined.

You get an impression that some in the community saw the police as interfering busybodies, spoiling people's fun from such reports as this from the *Northampton Mercury* on the Thrapston Feast in August 1870:

> *There was a large number of persons present, and in the evening the company danced to the music of the Ringstead brass band. The proceedings were extinguished by the police at about ten p.m.*

Can we reasonably infer from the word, 'extinguished', that the report writer considers that an enjoyable evening had been snuffed out?

Joseph had met Mary Elizabeth Bayfield (or Boyfield). She had been born at Upwell in Cambridgeshire where her father, John, had been a corn miller. However, John originally came from Bythorn and his wife, also called Mary, had been born in Raunds. It appears from the birthplace of one of their children that the family had been in Leeds in Yorkshire but when we find them, in 1861, Mary, the mother, is a young widow living back in Raunds with her children. She is a schoolmistress. Mary Elizabeth and Joseph Balderson married on 31st August 1869 and by the 1871 Census they are together, with their one-month year old son, Edgar, in Seivers Row, off Chapel Road, in Ringstead.

And so the cases continued for Ringstead's first resident constable. In February 1870 Lemuel Lockie, (another witness in the first case), was charged with stealing a hive of bees, the property of George Essex, baker of Denford. In this case we see the police constable's smart detection work. He gave evidence that he:

> *. . . searched prisoner's house and in the cellar found a piece of sack (now produced) and a pair of shoes (also produced). Upstairs witness [P.C. Balderson] found a pair of trousers with honey adhering to the inside of the leg. The trousers were concealed within blankets. The honey appeared to have been recently smeared on the trousers. Witness then went to the prisoner's garden and observing the soil near his door disturbed, unearthed a large iron pot containing several pounds of honey in the comb. The quantity was about a hivefull.*

Joseph also examined the defendant's closet and dust heap and found honeycomb from which honey had been extracted. He also compared the boots with the footmarks made in George Essex's garden and found that they matched. Lemuel was sentenced to three months imprisonment in the House of Correction.

Joseph also charged Frederick Bishop of Saffron Walden with begging on the 25th June 1870 and he was committed for one-month hard labour and, in the same year, William Dearlove, a local farmer's son, with two separate charges of shooting pigeons. The case was gone into in some detail and witnesses, employees of William's father, gave evidence on his behalf. The case against William Dearlove was finally dismissed but Joseph had shown that he was willing to charge those who lived in the big houses as well as the cottages.

In February 1871 he encountered the rascally Korah Dicks, now an 'aged man, although not quite sixty years old. He charged him with hitting a little girl with his stick who, he said, had spat at him. A year later Joseph is giving evidence against Elizabeth Jeffs for stealing turnips from Mr Peach's field. She was fined, including costs, 12s. 9d.; in default she was committed to gaol; for 14 days. The report tells us that Elizabeth:

> *. . . appeared to be about 16 years old, appeared to be an orphan and until recently was, with her brother, an inmate of the Thrapston Union Workhouse, whence they were taken by an old man with whom she has since lived.*

In fact Elizabeth, who was from Titchmarsh originally, was nearer thirteen than sixteen and had been in the Workhouse with her mother and two brothers. She and her brother, John may have escaped from poverty and crime but her youngest brother Henry is likely to be the twenty-one-year-old convict, born in Titchmarsh, who is in Pentonville Prison in 1881.

Joseph had five 'punishments' in his career but during this time he had been promoted back to Constable First Class on 1st January 1871 and then on 1st September 1873 to Merit Class

In February 1874 Joseph gave evidence in the case of George Wilson, a lad of about thirteen years of age, who was charged with stealing a silver watch. George admitted the theft and, as he had already been incarcerated for eight or nine days was only sentenced to receive ‘twelve strokes with a birch rod’. [George became ‘Manager of a Boot Manufactory’ in Northampton, married late in life to a woman, Ellen Elizabeth Slinn, fifteen years his junior and had three children.]

Unknown Constable in Northamptonshire County Constabulary. After 1879

© Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police. (Northamptonshire Police Archives)

I have not found further cases where Joseph Balderson is named and the diary of the new Constable, Elias Brown, shows that he took over in Ringstead from early 1877. It is a little confusing as in the 1881 Census we find Joseph with his wife, Mary, and their family which includes Alfred who is just one year old and born in Ringstead. They are now in Crick and Joseph is still a police constable although, on the 1st May 1882 Joseph was once again 'reduced', this time to Constable First Class. . He was then posted to Badby in west Northamptonshire where he is recorded in the 1891 Census. Soon after, on 30th November 1891 Joseph was 'discharged to pension' and his certificate of character is 'Fair'. Ten years later he is 61 and. in a, not unusual, ‘poacher turned gamekeeper’ move, Joseph has become a publican in the *Plume of Feathers* in Everdon.

Joseph was one of the few police constables who stayed long enough in Ringstead to become part of the community. On April 30th 1871 a son, Edgar William and on August 17th 1872 a daughter, Anna Maria were christened at the Parish Church and on February 22nd 1977 another daughter, called Mary after her mother, was buried in the churchyard). In all, it seems that the couple had at least six children who were born in Ringstead.

Bureaucracy in the police, often complained about today, was also a problem in the nineteenth century. The *Northampton Mercury* for 7th January 1871 had quoted the Chairman of the Police Committee who explained to the Court that:

> *. . . the number of returns the Chief Constable has to make, in addition to his other work, had increased so much of late, that the work over-taxed the energies and time of his clerk. The committee had the clerk up to examine him, and he said that for about four weeks in the quarter, he had to sit up till eleven o'clock at night, and some of the books were now in arrear for three years.*

The committee, at the Chief Constable's request, appointed a constable who could act in that capacity when he was not occupied with the clerical work. At that same Quarter Sessions the committee also allowed the promotion of constables from the 1st to the 2nd class without making any limit on the numbers but emphasised that a constable should not be moved from the 3rd class until he has served at least 6 months. I think the report should say from 2nd to 1st class (rather than the reverse) but it does show that the original five years service before promotion from third class had been relaxed. It seems that retaining constables had become a problem. As we have seen from some of the cases reported, it could be a difficult and sometimes dangerous job and was far from well paid.

We have said that it was confusing that Joseph Balderson had left his post in Ringstead in 1877 but seems to have still been living there in 1880. Part of the confusion is that there was a short term replacement called Edward Stones. He had been born in the Liberty of Normacot which is in the parish of Stone in Staffordshire. In 1854, when he was nineteen years old, he had joined the Royal Marines and left, after serving his time, in 1867. It seems that he worked as a labourer for a couple of years before joining the Northamptonshire Constabulary. At thirty-four he was older than most recruits but the military was a rich source of constables. He moved around, as was usual, from Little Bowden and Daventry to Northampton and then on to Thrapston. He moved again to the Oundle District before returning to Thrapston.

We do not know if Edward Stones was in Ringstead for the harvest accident on September 11th that the *Mercury*, in its report for the year 1879 recorded. A man called Overhill had been loading corn in the hayfield at Ringstead when he fell and broke his neck.

Many in Ringstead had wanted a constable to be available in the village so there was a need for a police house and station. At the Northampton Epiphany Quarter sessions on 7th January 1880:

> *The committee recommended that the Chief Constable should take a house at Ringstead at £7. 10s and a house at Crick at £6. 10s. for police constables.*

We find Edward in the 1881 Census living in the Seivers Buildings in the Carlow end of the village with his wife Sarah and their young children, Thomas, Joseph, George, and Richard. Richard, the youngest, is only one years old and he had been born in Brigstock in the Oundle District, so the family had not been in Ringstead long. We also know from the *Northamptonshire Constabulary*

Personnel Register that he was dismissed on 30th April, just a few weeks after the Census so his time in Ringstead was short.

No reason is given for his dismissal but in 1891 the family are at Ravensthorpe and it appears that he is a "navvy". In 1901, however, he is still at Ravensthorpe and it looks as if it is the same Census Collector's writing and Edward's occupation seems to read "navvel [sic] pensioner" so perhaps this was always the case. By 1901, his wife had died and his three unmarried sons are agricultural labourers and still at home. Only Richard is still at home by 1911 and Edward is 75 years old. He died two years later.

As we have said, the Diary of Police Constable Elias Brown shows that he became the constable in Ringstead in 1877 but how does this square with Edward Stones being there? It may be that he was a high flyer and was seconded to other duties around the District, while others temporarily took his place.

In 1881 he had been a constable, living with his wife Emily and their 10-month-old son George, at 58 Gold Street, Wellingborough. When exactly the Ringstead police house and station was purchased and if and when Elias and his family moved in I have been unable to find.

He had been born in Mears Ashby in about 1857 and he, like many constables, had been an agricultural labourer as a young man although his record in the *Personnel Register* records that he has been an, 'Attendant and Soldier'. He joined the Northamptonshire police force on 5th October 1876.

We first come across P.C. Brown named in the *Mercury* report of the Thrapston Petty Sessions on October 4th 1881, some five months after the dismissal of Edward Stones. Under a case about a 'battle royal between the rival clans of the Yorks and Grooms, old inhabitants of Denford' we find George Mundin and Owen Oxley were charged with a breach of the peace and John Abbott was charged with being drunk and disorderly In both instances, P.C. Brown 'proved the case'. In November of that year he was also concerned with a case where a lad named Petit. He was a shoemaker's son who had been sent to Higham Ferrers with some work. He returned home, saying he had been robbed of the money and described in some detail the man who had robbed him:

> *He wore a soft hat, black velvet coat, and cloth trousers and had black whiskers.*

Eventually he confessed that he had lost the money and had concocted the story to avoid being flogged by his father. The money was afterwards found by a lad named Flawn. The boy, Petit, had put down the money while playing and had forgotten what he had done. In December Elias apprehended Charles Andrews, an indolent 'Crispinite' [shoemaker] who had absconded, leaving his wife and family to be chargeable to the Thrapston Union. In February of the following year he gave evidence against James Barker and Charles Cope for being drunk and disorderly on the 7th January and Ralph Pearson and Joseph Attley for fighting outside the Temperance Hall between 10 and 11 o'clock at night on the 11th January. Other cases of drunkenness followed and in May 1883 there was a case which may illustrate changing attitudes to 'necessary force':

> *Thomas Jones, no fixed address, was charged with assaulting P.C. Elias Brown whilst in the execution of his duty on the 24th ult. The prisoner, about four o'clock in the afternoon, in company with two men and three women of a similar class, entered the beerhouse at Ringstead kept by Mr. Figgis [New Inn]. P.C. Brown perceived that some of them were intoxicated and he therefore followed them to caution the landlord against supplying them with more drink. The prisoner followed him outside and commenced attacking him in a*

manner which showed that he was an expert pugilist. The constable after receiving one or two blows on the chest, drew his staff and struck at the prisoner's arm. The latter accidentally received the blow on his head from which he lost a quantity of blood. – The bench inflicted a fine of 20s., and 13s. 10d costs.

Elias was promoted rapidly so that he was made a Sergeant Second Class on 15th January 1883 by which time he had already left Ringstead. On 1st December 1885 he was again promoted, to Sergeant First Class. He did have one favourable report but also six punishments which is perhaps surprising. Then, as now, it was a difficult profession in which to avoid censure. Elias "retired to his pension" on 5th January 1902 by which time he was in the Northampton Division.

In September 1883, John Skelly, a 2nd Class Constable, born in Middlesex, was posted to Ringstead. There seems to be greater cooperation with other constables and we see him patrolling in Denford, Great and Little Addington and sometimes in Raunds. As a result, P.C. Daniels and P.C. Andrews are also sometimes involved in Ringstead matters. Earlier in 1883 he had given evidence in cases which showed that he had previously been in Thrapston, perhaps serving his probationary time. He had joined the Northamptonshire Constabulary on 1st April 1882, aged thirty-two years old, and had been allocated to the Thrapston Division. His only reference was from the Marquis of Exeter although he had been an ordinary labourer. We see from the diary the long distances that rural Constables had to walk seven days a week. It was not unusual for them to walk twenty miles in a day. There was truth in the stereotype of a policeman needing solid, well-shod feet.

In 1878, the Contagious Diseases Act brought in new laws and controls to control epidemics in livestock. Farmers had to notify the police of any cases and isolate their stock. In September 1883 the *Mercury* has columns of announcements under this legislation notifying the public of the cases of Foot and Mouth Disease and Swine Fever and the isolated areas. Ringstead had seven 'infected places' with Foot and Mouth in a county total of 819. This disease had first been identified in England in 1839 but, initially, had not been thought of as serious, alongside the other diseases that livestock suffered.

John's early months were dominated by him dealing with this outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease among the local cattle herds although there was time for another, more unusual, case. His first entry in his diary reads:

Saturday 8th September 1883. On duty in Ringstead and neighbourhood and thence to Denford and neighbourhood. Mr. Robert Crawley of Thrapston reported that he had 30 Beast with the Foot and Mouth Disease in a Field called Grose Holme Meadow Ringstead. I have examined the fence and found them in good repair, thence to Thrapston making inquiry about 7 men belonging to a German band for stealing 2 sheets from a house in Bedford on the 7th instant. Met Inspector Tarry and P.C. Capps.

These meetings with the Inspector and other local constables were a regular part of the Constable's patrols with certain 'points' designated on his route for 'Conferences'. In these days before easy access to a telephone system, communication was a problem and this Conference system was a way in which the constables of adjoining parishes or 'beats 'could meet up and exchange information. It was also, of course, part of a monitoring system but these conferences would have provided some companionship and support, in what was often a lonely job. We see an earlier example of the checking aspect of the system in the diaries of Inspector Williamson which he kept from 1866 to 1888. On 28th January 1866 he came upon the unfortunate P.C. Ball who was at his 'point' at the Obelisk. [This probably refers to The Obelisk in Finedon at the junction of the Thrapston and

Irthlingborough Roads. It was erected in about 1789 as direction pillar and to record the return to sanity of George lll.]

> *Met Constable Ball, found him fast asleep at the point and snoring, his lamp stood by his side and after standing by him some few minutes I picked up his lamp and brought it home with me, he knowing nothing about it.*

We do not know what happened to P.C. Ball but he continued in the force. On the second day of John's stay in Ringstead, a Sunday, another 30 beast belonging to Mrs L. Gale were reported with the disease. He also visited Mr Thomas Nicholl's field called 'The Smalley' and found that a fence, erected to keep the cattle away from the gate, had been dismantled, apparently on the owner's orders.

There was still concern about the drinking culture in the village among some of the residents. At the Thrapston Petty Sessions on September 6th 1884 Superintendant Noble reported:

> *During the past year these houses [licensed] have been well conducted with two exceptions. One beer house keeper was convicted for a breach of his license and I had complaints of a publican at Ringstead not conducting his house properly but there was not sufficient evidence to summons him. . . A memorial, signed by about 80 inhabitants of Ringstead was presented to the Bench praying them to exercise the discriminating powers granted to them under a recent statute and refuse to grant any licences in the parish.*

Like all the other Constables, John Skelly had to deal with drunkenness and this meant much of his work was checking on the public houses at closing time. It would have been a long day. The Diary was not like the more modern policeman's notebook. It was a hardback book kept in the station and made up, usually at the end of the day. Inspector Tarry, on one of his visits has written in the margin, in a space provided:

> *Visited this station tonight at 11.40 pm. Constable Skelly in Bed. Found Diary made up and Sub-Division [Ringstead] quiet.*

Is this just a statement of fact or is there the implication that he thought the Constable should still have been on duty?

We see that John, every week or so, walked round the neighbourhood in plain clothes, 'looking for vagrants'. This was a specified part of his duties but it must have been some relief to be out of uniform.

The *Northampton Mercury* for 14th March 1885 reported on a socks crime when a homeless framework-knitter called William Hallam was accused of stealing 2½ pairs of socks valued at 3d. from William Wingell, tailor, of Raunds. John Skelly found him walking along the road to Kettering and, on searching him, found the socks. It transpired that he had also stolen a shirt and he was sentenced to one month's hard labour on both counts. In August of 1885, on that same road to Kettering, John apprehended a man who had stolen a pair of shoes from Great Addington. There is no mention of a wardrobe.

Beside John's cases for drunkenness or petty theft we also see the machinery of government increasingly making its impact locally. Parents, some with 'conscientious scruples' are prosecuted for not getting their children vaccinated or for not sending them to school. Charles Smith was summoned for 'neglecting to contribute towards the maintenance of his father, a pauper in receipt

of relief from the Thrapston Union but the case was dismissed when it was shown that Charles had only a pension of 7s a week to live on himself. Thomas Sewell, a miller, was prosecuted for not notifying the police that he had swine fever on his premises. He pleaded ignorance of the law and was fined just '1s. with £1 expenses'.

The last entry in the diary is for Sunday 25th January 1885. John moved to Paulerspury near Towcester and, in the *Mercury* of May 21st 1887 a J. Skelly from Towcester sent in one of the best solutions to a problem set in the newspaper's 'Draughts Column'. John died on 11th April 1888, still a young man. Is it a coincidence that there is a William Skelly, Baptist Minister, living in Rotton Row, Raunds at this time who had been born in County Down in Ireland?

John Thomas Puttnam (or Puttenham) was the next constable that we know to have been based in Ringstead. We see once again a flurry of court cases as he tried to impose his will on the local 'bad boys'. Like his predecessors he was the son of an agricultural labourer. He was born in Hartwell, in Northamptonshire, in about 1866 and as Thomas Puttnam we find him as a labourer too in the 1881 Census, aged just 15 years. Some five years later, on 1st September 1885, he joined the County Constabulary. He was first stationed in the Kettering Division before moving to Daventry. On 1st January 1889 he was promoted to Constable First Class but in April of the following year he was punished for some unnamed offence and this often seemed to lead to a posting to Ringstead. Certainly in 1891, now aged 25, he is lodging with Albert Orpin, an ironstone labourer, and his family in Carlow Street in Ringstead.

He seems to have got quite quickly into his stride and at the Thrapston Divisional Petty Sessions on 14th July 1891 he charged Samuel William Bull for 'furious driving' at Ringstead. In a case in which his Inspector prosecuted, he also gave evidence against William Robinson, beerhouse keeper at the Black Horse Inn for permitting drunkenness on his licensed premises. William protested that he had refused to serve the man, Thomas Hillson, as he was drunk, and he had tried to get him out of his house several times. In his defence shoemaker John Dix told the court that, as the landlord had refused to serve Hillson, he and his companions:

> *. . . gave him two pints on condition that he drank them in five minutes – Inspector Tarry: Did he manage it? – Witness: Yes; he done it in about three minutes. (Laughter.)*

It transpired that Hillson had been sold beer by the landlord's mother but in the circumstances the bench only ordered Robinson to pay costs but cautioned him about his future control of the house.

In March of the same year he gave evidence against William Davis from Thrapston for leaving his horse and cart right across the highway while he went into a public house.

More dramatic was his involvement with Constable Tebby and Inspector Tarry at a brawl at Denford Feast on June 5th 1893. At about ten-thirty at night the men in uniform heard of trouble and went to the feast. They met two Raunds men who were, 'the worse for drink and using bad language'. They told them to be quiet whereupon the men went up to John Puttnam and began abusing him. According to the Inspector one of the men, Clark then trod on his foot and he pushed him away:

> *. . . whereupon Clark immediately drew back and gave the witness a violent blow in the left eye, at the same time saying. 'Tak that, you -------'. Witness reeled from the effects of the blow and the two constables caught hold of Clark and when he had recovered a little he (witness) told Clark he should be arrested. Nunley then shouted out, 'Come on, chaps. The ---- - can't give us more than six months. A crowd began to collect and Robins and Nunley made a rush at the witness who was struck and kicked by Nunley whilst Robins caught hold of*

witness's leg with the object of throwing him down. Witness then forced Nunley into a doorway, and whilst doing so was struck on the back of the head by someone, and at the same time Robins succeeded in throwing witness down. Whilst on the ground witness was kicked on the head and about his body, and when he was getting up was again struck on the head from behind. Afterwards he saw Clark with the handcuff on his wrist strike Tebby, who was on the ground, with the other handcuff. Witness then drew his staff and when Clark was in the act of kicking Tebby struck him on the head. At the same time he saw both Nunley and Robins kick both constables and run back into the crowd. The two constables were then lying on the ground insensible but were afterwards picked up and taken into an adjoining house.

The men had a different version of events claiming that Clark had accidentally trod on the Inspector's foot and had been struck first and this had caused the fracas. Whatever the exact truth, it would have been a frightening experience for John Puttnam. He was examined by Mr. D Ramsay, surgeon of Raunds who found that:

. . . both eyes were blacked, the skin on the nose was broken, and there was a wound on the head, whilst he was bruised about the body and legs. In consequence of the injuries witness ordered the constable to go home to bed and he has been incapacitated from duty ever since.

John, who still bore 'unmistakeable evidence of the injuries he received', was allowed to sit down while he gave evidence. The five men involved, all from Raunds, were found guilty and the sentences ranged from a 20s. fine to six months in gaol.

Our last sighting of P.C. John 'Puttenham' is in November 1894 when he recognized that a prisoner being tried at the Assizes answered the description of a man wanted for the theft of jewellery and Jubilee coins from a Miss Robinson at Islip.

It was at this time that a Lighting Act was passed and in March 1895 a poll was taken at the Temperance Hall to decide whether it should be adopted in Ringstead. At a previous Parish Meeting 40 had voted for its adoption and only five against. A poll was from noon until 8 pm and at 8.15 pm the result was declared with 98 for the adoption and 33 against, thus giving the necessary two thirds required. Another part of the move to prevent crime was put in place.

John Puttnam married Mary Ann Donson in 1895, and we find him Police Constable, 1st Class with Mary Ann and a six year-old nephew in Barnwell. In fact. the *Personnel Register* has him moving to the Oundle Division on 10th August 1897 and we also see that he received another punishment on May 1897 which, as we have seen, often led to a posting away from the parish where the offence occurred. He did receive a favourable report in February 1896 but in June 1901 he was fined 10/- and extra pay was disallowed and he was also warned as to his future conduct. He died just three years later, on 22nd May 1904.

The police constable who brought the century to a close had probably travelled the furthest to keep the peace in Ringstead. We saw earlier that John Pengilly had left Ashburton in Devon, a place suffering a severe recession in the agricultural and woollen industries. Now, at the end of the nineteenth century another constable came to Ringstead from a place almost synonymous with the misery of farm workers and their families.

According to the *Personnel Register,* Frederick Sullivan was born in Kilmardon in Queens County (now County Laois) in southern Ireland in about 1865. The Great Famine of 1845-49 had devastated the area. The workhouses had not been able to cope with all those made destitute and many

emigrated or died. As in Devon and Cornwall, potato blight was at the heart of it, although the government's callous indifference played its part. We do not know what happened to Frederick Sullivan's family but we do know that on 4th November 1887 he joined the Coldstream Guards. His birthplace was given as Clonaslee in Queens County and he was 22 years and 9 months old.

In 1870 the Liberal Secretary of State for War, Edward Cardwell had introduced the Army Enlistment Act which had reduced the normal period of service of soldiers from 21 years to 12 years. Further, only about half of this period was to be served with the regulars. Frederick, like many who enlisted, served up to six years in the regiment before leaving the regular army but remained on the army reserve. He was liable for recall for a further six years if, at anytime, there was a national emergency.

His time in the Coldstream Guards could not have been long for he joined the Northamptonshire force on 4th December 1890 but his references are from Colonel Stirling and Major Codrington so it seems certain that he left the army with a good name. We find Frederick, in 1891, aged twenty-five, a police constable in the Police Station, London Road, Kettering living with the Inspector of Police, Levi Andrews and his family. Altogether there are ten police constables lodging there as well as two prisoners in the cells. One of those in the cells is an able seaman, born in Australia. Less than half a mile away a fourteen-year-old servant girl, Charlotte Payne, was working for Charles H. Robinson, Auctioneer and Valuer, at Linden Villa, Broadway.

We must assume that Frederick and Charlotte's paths crossed at this time for in late 1893 they were married. Charlotte, or Lottie, would have been only sixteen and Frederick ten years her senior. In 1895 the couple had a son whom they named Edwin. Frederick was then stationed at Naseby in Northamptonshire. The first case in which I have found him carrying out his duties is in the sad one of the finding of the body of a woman in Naseby Reservoir on 16th August 1892. He was 'severely reprimanded' in this month but, once again, we do not know the cause of his punishment.

Over the next years Frederick would have become experienced in dealing with the petty thefts, rick fires, suicides, assaults and drunkenness that would have been the main caseload of a rural policeman. This may have been another punishment posting for in May 1896 he had been severely reprimanded and in June he was posted to the Thrapston Division and became the Ringstead constable.

We do not find reported any cases in which he is involved but suddenly the Anglo-Boer war interrupts the lives of him and his family. The Northampton Mercury 13th October 1899 reports that the Chief Constable of Northamptonshire had sent out a letter to all the constables in the Army Reserve who have been ordered to rejoin their regiments:

> *The Constables who belong to the Army Reserve and who are about to rejoin their Regiments for active service in the Transvaal will be informed that should they return to the force at the end of their army service they will be entitled to reckon all the approved service which they were entitled to reckon at the date of their transfer to the Army. In wishing these men God-speed, the Chief Constable feels sure that they will do all that in them lies worthily to maintain the prestige of our Army and the glorious record of their different regiments.*

Frederick, stationed at Ringstead, was one of those called up to the Coldstream *Guards* and, on 17th October 1899, followed many other policemen back to war. Luckily for Frederick, his time at war was not too long and he returned to a hero's welcome on the 6.47 train on Saturday 19th October 1900. His wife and over 200 parishioners assembled at the station to:

. . . give their highly respected officer a hearty welcome. A conveyance had been provided. The horse was taken from the shafts of the vehicle and amidst cheers, Mr. Sullivan was drawn by the villagers, accompanied by Mrs. Sullivan and their two children, into the village up to his front door where every good wish and congratulation was given him on his safe return.

A little girl had been born in Frederick's absence and he and his family were living at 10 Gladstone Street. After his furlough, which lasted until 30th October, he settled back down in the new century to the usual round of thefts, cows on the highway, riding a bicycle without lights, domestic violence and drunkenness. The couple had four more children and, on 19th September 1906, he was posted to Wansford in the Oundle Division. He was awarded £2 for 'meritorious conduct for stopping a runaway horse and cart in Nassington on 13th May 1907'. On 1st December 1919 he retired to enjoy his pension.

The police constables had become part of the life of Ringstead village life. Most seem to have stayed about five years and gained the respect of the majority of the inhabitants. Alongside the constables came organised sport, the lighting of village streets and the temperance movement to help bring order. We see, by the welcome given to Frederick Sullivan that most Ringstead people had accepted and now welcomed the men in blue who had helped make their village a safer, quieter, place to live in. We, now, look back nostalgically to the time when the friendly local copper pounded the streets rather as some of the old men drinking in the *Swan* or the *Black Horse* would have reminisced about the good times they had, before the ------ bobbies came to spoil their fun.

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Chapter Six

The Staff of Life

Mary Betts, Thomas Lee, Thomas Chapman Coleman, Thomas Haines,
John Childs, Andrew Bull, Thomas Austin, Joseph Scholes, Robert Woodruff

A little after the First World War, The Millers' Mutual Association published a colourful pamphlet on the history of bread. This opened with the words:

> *From time immemorial bread has been the most important food of man. Throughout history its distribution has been the chief concern of Kings and Governments. A shortage of bread has led to revolutions and the downfall of empires. A great deal of the legislation of the world has been devoted to ensuring an adequate supply of bread to the people.*

There may be some local pleading here but bread has had a significant place in the social history of the western world. It has been an important Christian symbol and a constant focus for political unrest.

The eighteenth century ended with England at war with Napoleon's France and a string of poor harvests. The price of a quartern loaf (weighing 4 pounds) in London rose to 1s 5d at a time when many were earning less than 10 shillings a week. The corn dealers and bakers' shops were looted and the king's carriage attacked. *The Times* in 1795 printed a list of rules that it said was the way to 'Peace and Plenty'. - These included:

1 *Abolish all gravy soups and second courses.*
2 *Buy no starch when wheat is dear.*
3 *Destroy all useless dogs.*
4 *Give no dog or other animal the* ***smallest*** *piece of bread or flour.*
5 *Save all your skim-milk carefully and give it all to the poor or sell it at a cheap rate.*
6 *Make broth, rice puddings etc., for the poor and teach them to make such things.*
7 *Go to church*

It is perhaps surprising to see rice as a cheap substitute for bread but this was a bonus of empire often helped by slave labour. Even in 1850 poor Lydia Attley, on the last day that she was seen alive, was going to buy some rice for her dinner. It is likely that she ate it as a rice pudding which would have been considered a good, digestible dish for an invalid or pregnant woman. Another staple crop was becoming popular with working families, much to the disgust of William Cobbett. In his very popular *Cottage Economy*, published in 1822, he railed against the potato with his usual prejudice:

> *. . . in the evidence given before the Agricultural Committee . . .many labourers, especially in the West of England, use potatoes instead of bread to a very great extent. And I find from the same evidence that it is the custom to allot the labourers "a potato ground" in part payment of their wages! This has the tendency to bring English labourers down to the state of the Irish whose mode of living, as to food, is but one remove from that of the pig, and of the ill-fed pig too.*

Cobbett was also strongly against the 'shop' replacing the market stall, believing it an unnecessary, cost intrusion between producer and consumer. Further, in his book, he encouraged labourers to be as self-sufficient as possible which is why his star rose again in the 1970s. He 'proves' that bread, financially and in all other respects, was better than potatoes and that baking it at home was similarly better than buying the bakers' loaves.

> *How wasteful then, and indeed how shameful for a labourer's wife to go to the baker's shop; and how negligent, how criminally careless of the welfare of his family, must the labourer be, who permits so scandalous a use of the proceeds of his labour!*

Nevertheless, Ringstead had at least two bakers' shops for most if not all of the nineteenth century. The making of bread was a time-consuming business, even if, as Cobbett suggested, the week's supply was baked in one go. Further, many of the cottages would have only had an open fire with their cooking done in front of it or in a pot over it. The baking of bread would have been difficult or impossible for many in the poorer homes. Of course the bakers would also have catered for the demand of the emerging middle class for the white bread as well as cakes and pastries.

Ringstead and the parishes around seem to have maintained, at least in some form, local flour which would have been brought by horse and cart from the water and wind mills and it seems likely that the bakers continued to use this, throughout the century, even though there would have been increasing competition from the New World flour and the larger mills and bakeries in the towns and cities. Even as early as 1786 the Albion Mills, the first great steam-powered factory in London, had been established and ground 10 bushels of wheat an hour. The local millers faced ruin until it burnt down in mysterious circumstances.

The Bett or Betts family had been bakers in Ringstead for much of the eighteenth century. They were part of a large family of farmers, the first son usually being christened, 'White'. Samuel Bett, born in about 1703 was the first baker that we know of and his son John, born in about 1734 followed his father's trade. I have not found an older brother called White, and we only know of a brother Samuel, born in 1737 and buried a year later. John married Mary and they had at least four children: Joseph, John, Samuel and Hannah. John died when he was only about forty-five years old in 1779 but Mary carried on with the family business until her death a quarter of a century later. She was buried in Ringstead churchyard on June 15th 1804 aged seventy-four.

The bakery and house were advertised for sale in the *Northampton Mercury* on 14th July 1804, with immediate possession. There is some confusion here for the 'deceased widow' is referred to as Hannah, not Mary, Betts and we must assume that this is a mix-up with her daughter Hannah. The list of the household furniture and effects shows that she had lived in some comfort, perhaps helped by the Betts' yeoman background. The items auctioned by Richard Smith at the *Swan*, included:

> *Bedsteads and Furniture; Feather and Flock Beds; Blankets and Quilts; Bed and Table Linen; Dining, Tea and Dressing Tables; Chests of Drawers; Pier and Swing Glasses; neat Chairs; Clock; Pewter Dishes and Plates; Glass, China and Earthenware; Brass Pots and Kettles; Kitchen Requisites; Brewing Copper, sweet Casks, Tubs and a Variety of other Effects.*

Also included in the sale was the house and bakery which are described as:

> *A Freehold MESSUAGE or TENEMENT, with an old-accustomed Bakehouse in Full Trade, suitable Barns, Stables, and other Out-offices belonging; also a neat GARDEN and ORCHARD, situate in RINGSTEAD aforesaid, and late in the Occupation of the said Hannah Betts.*

N.B. The Fixtures, Baking Implements, and Wood, may be taken by the Purchaser at a fair Valuation;

The sale of the wood shows us that coal fired ovens had not yet reached Ringstead. The ovens would probably still have been heated in the centuries-old way by burning bundles of sticks, or faggots, in the brick oven until it reached the correct temperature, then raking out all the ashes and putting in the dough onto the hot stones and closing the door. It was a long process and the baker would be one of the first risers in the village.

At the end of the advertisement for the sale it adds:

May be viewed in the mean Time; and further Particulars had of Mr FRANCIS TIDBURY, at Woodford Mills, Administrator of the Goods and Chattels of the said Hannah Betts.

We know that the children of Mary Betts signed over their "Right, Title and Interest of in and to the Burthen of Administration of the said chattels and credits of the said deceased". It is clear that Mary had built up large debts to Francis Tidbury, presumably for flour, and, perhaps, as she grew older and less able to run the bakery. As we have said, for most of the nineteenth century Ringstead supported two bakeries but it was not a way to make one's fortune and some went bankrupt along the way.

We do not know exactly what the bakery would have looked like inside but it seems likely that it was little different from when it was built. In 1805, one year after Mary's death, *A Treatise on the Art of Bread-Making* was published. It describes what a good bakehouse should look like:

A bakehouse is a manufactory where bread is made for the purpose of sale. In order to render it convenient, it should be attached to the dwelling house, and have an inner door opening into the kitchen, and likewise an outer door to open into a small yard. In this yard there ought to be a well or pump, as also a shed for the piling of faggots. The room should be large and commodious, and the floor laid with stone or tiles. On one side should be erected a dresser or counter , with suitable shelves above it; on the other side a kneading trough about seven feet long, three feet high, two feet and a half broad at top and sixteen inches at bottom with a sluice board to pen the dough up at one end, and a lid to shut down like that of a box. On a third side a copper will contain from three to four pails of water should be erected, which is far preferable to the filthy custom of heating the water in the oven; and on the fourth side the oven should be placed.

The production of bread was hard work, as anyone who has made bread at home by hand, can testify. Imagine it with the following quantities given by H.G. Muller in *Baking and Bakeries:*

About 5 imperial gallons (22.7 litres) of yeast were mixed with enough hot water to bring the whole to blood heat. 3½ pounds (1.59kg.) of salt were then dissolved in it and the whole was added to about 1 hundredweight (50.8 kg) of flour in a wooden trough. The mixture was then well worked up by hand until quite free from lumps. This was called the sponge. Its surface was then made level and a little flour sprinkled on it. The whole was then covered up and allowed to ferment for twelve hours. After that warm water containing again 3 pounds (1.59 kg) of salt as well as 3 hundredweight (152.4 kg) of flour was added and the whole worked up into a uniform dough. That was again covered and allowed to ferment for an hour and a half. It now swelled and when sufficiently spongy it was called 'proof' and was fit for dividing, weighing and shaping into loaves. These were then introduced into the oven by means of an oven peel.

Of course, the actual quantities used by Mary Betts and her successors would have varied but bread was a large part of most Ringstead families' expenditure, and the number of loaves needed would have been great.

The next time that we meet the Ringstead bakers is in the 1841 Census. There are two separate bakeries now in business: Thomas Lee, who was next to Vicarage House (or Farm), and Thomas Coleman. There must have been bakers between the death of Mary Betts in 1804 and 1841 but so far we have not found them. Thomas Lee did appear in the *List of Licensed Victuallers* for Ringstead in 1822 but without a public house named for him. The trades of brewer and baker had long been associated as originally the froth from the beer was used to produce the yeast for the baking. At about twenty years of age, Thomas was probably too young to have bought Mary Betts's bakery in 1804 but it may be by 1822 he was already the village baker.

The Ringstead parish registers do show the christening, on March 30th 1835, of Elizabeth, the daughter of William (not the later blacksmith, parish clerk and postmaster) and Rebecca Bradshaw. William is shown as a baker but by 1841 the family had moved to Leicester with William now a journeyman baker. By 1851 he is a hawker but by 1861 he had become a baker again. The children are shown as being born in Denford (even Elizabeth) or Leicester so it is likely that William was a journeyman working for one of the other bakers either in Ringstead or Denford.

Thomas Lee was born in East Farndon, south-west of Market Harborough in about 1786. His brother William remained in the area to become a farmer or grazier, with, in 1851 146 acres and employing two labourers. Thomas, however, moved south some twenty-five miles to Ringstead. Neither brother married and both had housekeepers. In 1841 Thomas was 55 and described as a baker. Living with him were Susannah Archer 50, female servant; Samuel Eastham [?], 15, a male servant and Elizabeth Teat, 53, whose role is indecipherable. By 1851 Thomas is a master baker employing one man who is John Hames Dainty, aged 38 a journeyman baker born in Geddington. The women, both born in Stanwick, have aged alarmingly because Susannah Archer is now seventy-five and Elizabeth Teat, a widow is a pauper and eighty years old.

Thomas calls himself a master baker and this could just be a 'puff', as I have seen an advertisement for a 'master window cleaner', but it may indicate that he considered himself superior to the other baker in the village and besides bread baked a range of cakes and biscuits. The George family kept a baker's shop in Folkingham, in Lincolnshire, some 45 miles to the north. Between 1833 an 1838 they wrote 'receipts' in a small notebook. This was published by Teresa Crompton in 1997 under the title *A Pound of Fine Flower (this alternative spelling was just going out of fashion).* By looking at the recipes we can see the sort of fare that a village bakery at the time might offer for sale.

The main ingredients used are flour, sugar, butter and milk with a flavouring such as ginger, bitter almonds, lemon juice, caraway seeds and nutmeg. Other common ingredients included eggs, currants and ground rice. The main rising agent used was ''Viletta' or Volatile salts' which was a form of Ammonium Carbonate. As it was also used in smelling salts it can be imagined that the smell of ammonia would have hung around the bakery. Many of the names of the recipes have a familiar ring; almond cakes, gingerbread, Shrewsbury cakes, Abernethy biscuits, Madeira buns and so on. After the heavy kneading of the bread it may seem that it was a relief to make the biscuits and cakes until one sees a recipe for a, well-named, Pound Cake which, after the ingredients, includes the instruction to, 'beat them all together for one hour'.

In these days before compressed yeast the preparation of yeast was a laborious process for each baker made his or her own from his 'stock yeast' The starter was made from hops, flour and malt beaten into a stiff batter, covered, and allowed to sit for twenty-four hours. This was used as the key

ingredient to make the stock yeast which also had to sit for twenty-four hours. Some of this was used each day to start the next batch. Once a month the baker ought to have cleaned everything up and started again but many carried on for a year.

It was hard, time-consuming work to turn the flour into bread, cakes and biscuits but the baker was always being accused of overcharging and short measures. This was partly because of the vital part played by bread in many people's diet and the rising price of 'corn' caused by the Corn Laws, passed in 1815 to protect the farmers from cheap imports from the New World and elsewhere. In many large cities there was rioting and corn factors and bakers were attacked and pillaged. On a local scale, in 1843, Thomas Lee was fined 12 shillings for deficient weights at Wellingborough Petty Sessions. Many small traders were similarly caught as the local Police Inspector began to implement the new laws which standardised and checked weights and measures throughout the country. Bread was a precious commodity and had to be sold by weight.

This suspicion of bakers can be seen from this article in the Stamford Mercury for 16th September 1842:

> *"How is it," observes a correspondent, that the bread is so dear, notwithstanding the reduced price of wheat? The answer is plain. The public allow the baker to fix the price and never stay to question it. When the assize of bread was abolished, it was imagined that people would say to a baker 'What is the price of a 4lb loaf?' as they do to a butcher, 'What is the price of a leg of mutton?' – and would, if discontented with the price, walk out of the shop and make the purchase elsewhere; but habit is stronger than reason. The people had for so long a period been accustomed to think of bread as something settled at a price over which they had no means of control that the most frugal housewife among them never dreams of making a loaf a matter of bargain. Of course the baker will not lower the price, if not compelled; but they have carried the high-price matter too far; and not individual remonstrances but public attention is now directed to the matter. As bread is an article of daily manufacture, it might be as well to consider whether it would not be a good speculation to establish ovens, where for a small charge (smaller than now demanded for baking a joint) loaves might be baked, and thus people enabled, if they pleased to bake their own bread, as they bake their own dinners.*

We see that the practice of roasting the Sunday joint in the baker's ovens for a charge was a long established one and also that many, perhaps most, working-class families had stopped baking their own bread, in spite of Cobbett's campaign.

Thomas Lee died on the 12th April 1855 and in his will left to his brother William, a grazier in Great Oxenden:

> *. . . all that my messuages and tenement in Ringstead aforesaid wherein I now reside with the Bakehouse, Yards, Gardens, Premises and appurtenances thereunto belonging.*

He also left nineteen guineas to his servant Susan Archer and five guineas to John Griffuth Leete, his surgeon [Doctor].

As we have seen Thomas Lee was not the only baker in Ringstead but before we consider his rival it is worth just noting a certain James Wilkinson who was the alleged father of Lydia Attley's first child before she disappeared heavy with her second, allegedly murdered by William Weekley Ball. James was a journeyman baker from Leicestershire who married Lydia Hill, the daughter of James Hill, publican of the *Black Horse*. They moved to Welford and he was a baker there for over thirty years.

The other baker in the 1841 Ringstead Census was Thomas Chapman Coleman. He too came from outside the village being born in Holcot and baptised in Ringstead on 30th September 1813, some seventeen miles to the west. All his younger brothers and sisters are christened in Ringstead so it seems the family moved there soon after his birth. . He married Deborah Lawrence from Denford on 3rd May 1831 in Ringstead Parish Church. His mother, Mary, died less than a fortnight later and was buried in Ringstead churchyard. His sons, Charles Chapman Coleman, who was born on 5th November 1826, and John Joseph, born on 18th June 1835 were baptised in the Ringstead Particular Baptist Church

By 1841, as we have seen, he was a baker in Ringstead, with his wife, and sons Charles and John. By 1851 Charles has moved away and John is a butcher's apprentice. Louise Saddington from Denford is a house servant. The *Northampton Mercury* for 12th July 1851 may give a possible reason for there being no further children and the need of a servant. Among the death announcements is the following notice:

> *At Ringstead, July 4th, after eight years' spinal affliction, borne with Christian fortitude, Deborah, the beloved wife of Thomas Chapman Coleman, baker, Ringstead, aged 45 years.*

We do not see any of the family again in an English Census and it seems certain that soon after Deborah's death they left England and took their chances on the other side of the world. We have chased many a Ringstead resident across the seas but this time we will only record these entries in the Birth Married and Death columns of the newspapers:

> *On the 1st instant, [May 1852] by special licence at St. James' Church by the Rev. J. Grylls, Mr. Charles Chapman Coleman of George-street to Miss Mary Ann Esther Chormdery, eldest daughter of Mr. J.J. Chormdery of Windmill-street, Sydney*
>
> *COLEMAN – April 24 1886 at his residence, Botany-road, Waterloo [Sydney], Thomas Chapman Coleman aged 74.*

John Joseph probably died in 1876 in Victoria so the following item in the *Barrier Miner* [Broken Hill, NSW] may or not be relevant. It does sum up a way of life for those mining pioneers:

> *John Joseph Casey was found guilty at the Criminal Court of the manslaughter of John Joseph Coleman. Casey hit Coleman on the head with a stick on Good Friday. The judge fined Casey £15 and allowed him time to pay it.*

Thomas Haines was the next baker to help provide the daily bread from one of Ringstead's bakeries. He had been born in Great Catworth in Huntingdonshire and in 1841 it is probably him working for a farmer in Easton. In 1849 he married Elizabeth Vickers Wilby, whose father was a baker from Market Harborough. Perhaps as a result of this, aged just twenty-five, he is also a baker at 49 Newlands Street in Higham Ferrers. They have an eight-week-old daughter also called Elizabeth, an apprentice baker and a young servant girl. Thomas's younger brother, William, is also staying with them. He, too, is a baker and although shown as a visitor he is perhaps also helping his brother.

He moved to Ringstead in the middle of the 1850s. We know that from the 1861 Census which shows him, aged 35, in the Ringstead High Street. He has two more daughters. Honoria is six and born in Higham Ferrers and Anne is five and born in Ringstead so it seems that he moved to Ringstead in 1855 or 1856. He is now described as a master baker, employing two journeyman bakers. His bakery business seems to be growing fast: perhaps too fast for his finances.

In April 1862 we learn a little about what has been happening from a newspaper report in the *Northampton Mercury.* Unfortunately it is from a report of a case in the Crown Court where Thomas has been indicted for obtaining the sum of £171 by false pretences from the Thrapston branch of the Northamptonshire Union Bank. The article records that Mr. Merewether, for the prosecution told the jury that:

> *The prisoner was a local preacher and might well have paused before he entered upon an act upon which nobody who heard of it could come to a favourable conclusion.*

Thomas banked in Wellingborough and was struggling financially. He had been granted an overdraft, upon certain sureties, up to a limit of £600. He had used £535 of that permitted overdraft when he received cheques to the value of £386 [in effect, unpaid bills] from London. He tried to borrow £100 from his father without success and presented a cheque for £170 at the Thrapston branch of the Northamptonshire Union Bank and was given this amount in cash. He then paid this into the Wellingborough account so that he could pay off some of the outstanding bills. He had hoped that the cheque would go via London and take several days to clear, giving him time to borrow the money from somewhere. The Thrapston manager, however, sent the cheque directly to Wellingborough and it was immediately dishonoured.

The jury found Thomas not guilty of trying to defraud the bank but he was obviously in financial difficulties. On April 9th 1862, Thomas Haines, corn factor and baker of Ringstead, by his own petition was registered bankrupt. On 3rd June of the same year at five o'clock in the afternoon, at the White Hart Hotel Thrapston, his possessions were sold by his 'Mortgagee'.

These were sold in four lots. These included:

> *Lot 1. All that roomy and convenient MESSUAGE or Farm House situate in Ringstead in the County of Northampton, with the Barns, Yards, Gardens, Homestead, Orchard and piece of Land thereto adjoining. And also all those THREE COTTAGES or Tenements thereto adjoining, with the Barns and Out-buildings.*
>
> *These Premises extend from the East end of the Street of Ringstead [High Street] to the Back Lane and contain with the site of the buildings 1A. 1R. 9P. (little more or less.)*

Lot 2 contained a close of pasture land containing 6 acres and 36 perch; Lot 3 arable land of 8 acres and 29 perch; and Lot 4 arable land of 8 acres 1 rood and 9 perch. This land appears to have been in one piece with Back Lane on the south and Denford Road on the east. Surprisingly there is no mention of the bakery. Of course he may have been renting it or owned both and it was the purchase of the farmhouse, cottages and land that caused his downfall. He overreached himself.

Whatever the details, his career as a baker was over and the 1871 Census finds the family living in Green Lane Terrace in Kettering. Thomas is now a 'Traveller' and one daughter is a haberdasher and the other a governess. His wife, Elizabeth has no paid work and they still employ a young girl as a servant. Things are similar in 1881 but by 1891, a Traveller in the Corn Trade, Thomas and Elizabeth are living at 20 Castle Road, Bedford. Their married daughter Honoria and her daughter, Maria are staying with them and they still have another young girl working as a general servant for them.

It seems likely that Thomas and Elizabeth overstretched themselves in Ringstead but he found new work in the corn trade and they managed to maintain a servant and their middle-class status.

In the 1862 edition of Slater's Royal National Commercial Directory there are three bakers in Ringstead. Alongside Thomas Haines there are John Childs and Andrew Bull. Andrew does not appear in the Melville and Co. Directory of the previous year. We see the Andrew Bull is a new village baker but does the fact that the three bakers are all recorded in 1862 mean that there were three bakeries?

Whatever the answer it does seem that probably John Childs started his bakery in 1861 and Andrew Bull in 1862. They were both to remain village bakers for many years. It is their stories that we are now going to try to discover.

John 'Chiles' had been baptised in Ringstead Parish Church on December 25th 1816, the son of James and Susannah. James was originally from Southoe in Huntingdonshire but had married a Ringstead girl, Elizabeth Whiteman, and settled in the village. John married Elizabeth, (also 'Chiles'), on June 12th 1837 also in the parish church and by the 1841 Census the young couple already had three children; Joseph 3, Sarah 2 and Martha 6 months old and had moved to Swineshead, some ten miles away, in Bedfordshire. John's mother Susannah and his younger brother George are also staying with them. Judging by the birthplace of their eldest son, Joseph they moved to Swineshead immediately or soon after their marriage. John is a shoemaker.

By 1852 the couple have seven children living at home and two young shoemakers from Catworth are working for him. It is not clear but it appears that John is also a grocer. His wife, Elizabeth is a shoe binder and the two older girls are lacemakers.

It must have been a busy household but by 1861 they have moved back to Ringstead and John has a new career. We see him in the High Street, one of the village bakers. He is 45 years old, two years younger than his wife, and is helped in his new business by his fifteen-year-old son, Samuel. Robert, the eldest son, and still at home, is a shoemaker. His house and bakery is one house from the Chapel Road turning in the Census so we can be sure that it is what are now two houses, 47 and 49 High Street. It seems that the bakehouse was in number 47 and the house and, possibly, the shop in number 49. This position is confirmed by comparing the black and white postcard below with the earlier picture of the Post Office in the biography of the postmasters. We can see that the two shops were neighbours, although unfortunately the Post Office building has now disappeared.

1871 finds the family still at the bakery but only daughters, Elizabeth, a dressmaker and Martha a 'baker's daughter' are now at home. Does a 'baker's daughter' help in the shop or the bakery?

At about the time of the Census collection in 1871, John is involved in a court case to recover 12s. from a porter called Cadman, employed by the London and North-Western Railway Company at Thrapston. The debt had actually been to his son who we learn had since emigrated. In fact Cadman's wife, who was a witness, was too ill to attend so the case was adjourned.

The years roll by and 1881 has John (65) and Elizabeth (67) with the only family living with them being John's widowed sister, Mary Ann (68). John does have some help, however, because lodging with them there is a sixteen-year-old assistant baker from Raunds.

The Old Bakehouse (47/49 High Street)
Author's Photograph 2012

A 1920s view of the Old Bakehouse from the opposite direction showing the Swan in the distance

[The Bakery is the white building on the left. You can just see the shop sign over the door. The first building on the left had been the Post Office at the end of the Nineteenth Century]

Reproduced with permission of the Northamptonshire Telegraph.

Olde Bakery Cottage (17 High Street)

Author's Photograph 2012

Two bakers might seem enough for a small village but it appears that there were sometimes three or more competing for trade. Perhaps as the village bakers got older others saw a chance to increase their own trade. Henry Peach was a baker in Denford and we know that at this time that he too was delivering bread in the village. On 15th May 1882 he and his 'boy' were on their round, in the village, unaware that Inspector Alexander was watching them. There had been 'complaints'. Perhaps one of the village bakers was annoyed by Henry Peach coming into his patch. The Inspector:

> *Went to Mr. Bradshaw's, publican [I am not sure which public house this was] and found he had left two loaves there, a "cottage" and a loaf baked in a tin. Witness weighed the bread, and found 4 ozs. Short in the two loaves, - Mr. Peach acknowledged the offence, and said he was very sorry it had occurred but he was under the impression that the loaves came within the denomination of "fancy bread" and did not require weighing. – The same defendant was also charged with selling five other loaves other than by weight on the same date and in the same parish. – Inspector Alexander deposed that these were delivered at the house of Joseph Fox. There was a deficiency of 6 ozs. In the five loaves. – Mr. Peach was then charged with delivering bread from his cart and not being provided with scales to weigh the same, at Ringstead, on the same day. – Defendant acknowledged the offence and pleaded in extenuation that the lad had accidentally left the scales at home. He was very sorry for what had occurred, and would take care it did not happen again.*

Henry Peach was fined for not selling 'by weight'. The fact that Henry Peach might consider the loaves 'fancy' may indicate that the standard loaf was a 'batch loaf' which was not baked in a tin.

Unfortunately for John, at the same court session, he was charged with having an 'unjust flour scale' just two days after Henry Peach was caught. The report states:

> *It appeared that the scale was about one ounce against the purchaser. There was dough on it, and after cleaning the scale the deficiency was reduced. – Inspector [sic?] Noble said the defendant was a most respectable man, and had never before been summoned on a similar charge. – The Bench considered that it to be rather the result of carelessness than with a fraudulent intent; they therefore imposed the mitigated fine of 5s. and 14s 6d. expenses. - On Superintendant Noble's application the scales were (after adjustment) ordered to be given up to the defendant.*

We do see that John Childs was a well-regarded man but perhaps age was catching up on him. We do not have a description of John. Was he like Grandfather Iden, who Richard Jefferies describes in *Amaryllis at the Fair,* which was published in 1887?

> *He wore a grey suit, as a true miller and baker should, and had worn the same cut and colour for years and years. In the shop too, he always had a grey suit on, perhaps its original hue was white, but it got to appear grey upon him; a large grey chimney-pot, many sizes too big for his head apparently, for it looked as if forever about to descend and put out his face like an extinguisher. Though his boots were so carefully polished, they quickly took a grey tint from the flour dust as he pottered about the bins in the morning.*

John died, aged seventy-two, and was buried in the churchyard on October 20th 1888. It seems likely that the house and business was sold and by 1891 his widow, Elizabeth, aged 74 and his sister, Mary Ann, are living together in Carlow Street.

At first I had thought that his only competitor was Andrew Bull but there was one other, besides Henry Peach, who does not appear in any of the trade directories. On 29th April 1876 the *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* printed a nationwide list of 'Petitions for Liquidation by Arrangement'. Among them was:

> *T. Austin, Ringstead, Northamptonshire, baker.*

He must have managed to carry on with his business for, on 22nd November 1879, the *Northampton Mercury* records that at the Thrapston Petty Sessions on November 16th:

> *Thomas Austin of Ringstead was charged by Inspector Alexander of Oundle with unlawfully selling to one, Rebecca Morris, two loaves of bread otherwise than by weight. – Defendant was fined 5s. and also ordered to pay expenses amounting to £1 3s. 8d.*

It may be now that baking ovens were more easily installed. Coal-fired ovens, heated externally, sometimes by pipes, were taking over from ovens needing wood fires lit in the oven space itself. In the *Northampton Mercury* of 5th June 1880 Hughes and Co. of the Railway Waggon [sic] Works and Coal Yard, Gas Works Wharf, Northampton advertised its list of coals for sale. These included:

> *BADDESLEY Best known kind for Bakers*
>
> *[Baddesley was a pit in Warwickshire. Just two years after this advertisement, on 2nd May 1882, 32 men lost their lives when a pumping boiler set light to coal dust causing an explosion. 23 of the dead were from the rescue party.]*

When we look through the Ringstead Censuses we find that Thomas Austin was a carrier in 1861. He was 33 years old and born in Podington in Bedfordshire. He and his wife, Sarah, have four young children, all born in Ringstead. By 1871 he had become a baker and a grocer in Shop [High] Street. Sarah died in 1879 and by 1881 he is shown as a widower and a 'baker and outdoor beer house' only two doors from the *Black Horse.* He died in 1890 and was buried on March 14th aged sixty-two.

We can only guess at Thomas Austin's place in the local baking hierarchy but it seems likely that he was at the corner shop end of the market providing bread for London End rather than the emerging middle classes. We see no description of 'Master Baker', and no journeyman assistants. It seems that he never made more than a poor living from his shop.

A Baker's Oven

This picture is from 1920s but would have changed little from nineteenth century

[From Work and Workers, Shown to the Children by Arthur O. Cook]

If we now return to Andrew Bull, we have already briefly met him in another biography. He was the younger brother of Kezia Bull who married the Chemist, Herbert Joseph Abington. He is recorded in the diary of Herbert's son, also Herbert, as Uncle Andrew. He was born on 18th April 1826 to John and Sarah Bull who were paper makers at Ringstead Mill. They were member of the Ringstead Particular Baptist Church and there is some temptation to wonder if the bakeries were divided on sectarian lines, one for the established church and one for the nonconformists.

There is no sign of Andrew in the 1841 Census but there are two Samuel Bulls, both rounded to the age of fifteen and both tailors. One is living with one sister, Susannah and the other is with Sarah Cheney, another, widowed, sister. It may be that one of these boys was Andrew and probably he is the second 'Samuel' as in 1851 he is shown as living with Sarah and her second husband, George Smith. By now he is working as a shoemaker. On 6th July 1854 he married local girl, Mary Ann Partrick and had three children, Elizabeth, Ralph and Eliza before the 1861 Census where he was shown as a shoemaker and baker. The eldest child, Elizabeth is given as being born in Brigstock so presumably the couple had lived there for a time.

His wife, Mary Ann Partrick, had been born in Ringstead but in 1851, at the age of twenty-three she was a cook at Islip for Ralph Wilson (76) a wine merchant and his wife Susannah (70) who is described as a 'gentlewoman'. When we return to the 1861 Ringstead census we see that Mary Ann is shown as the 'Manager of the Bakehouse' and it seems likely that she was the one with the expertise, who was in charge of the baking. There is a young apprentice shoemaker living with them and the only help is probably from Herbert Abington, their nephew, who is described as a baker. It seems that the couple had to do almost all the baking themselves with much of the work falling on Mary Ann. It would have been hard work with long hours but she would have been used to this as a cook.

It seems unlikely that the sickly Herbert worked long for his uncle and by 1871 Andrew is shown in Shop Street (High Street) as the baker and Mary Ann as the baker's wife. Perhaps Andrew had learned his trade from his wife and had given up the shoemaking. Mary-Ann may have run the shop still but she had four children to look after, ranging in ages from three to sixteen years old, for their youngest son, George has been born.

We learn from a court case in July 1875 that Andrew had a sideline as a pig dealer. He had bought a dozen, twelve-week-old pigs from Mr Brawn of Ringstead. The next day he tried to make a quick profit by selling them at auction but they did not make the price he wanted so he had to buy them in. He had a chat at the *Swan Inn* with Mr Holmes a coal dealer from Denford and agreed to take them there for him to examine:

> *Plaintiff [Andrew Bull] emptied the pigs out of his cart into the defendant's stye. Defendant [Mr. Holmes] then examined the pigs and found a good deal of fault with them. I said, "Look here, Mr. Holmes, if the pigs are no good to you, you don't have to have them." He said, "I will give you 16s. each" and I let him have them.*

So, after some haggling, the sale was agreed. This was on the Tuesday and on the Friday Holmes asked Andrew to look at the pigs for two of them were dead. It transpired that they had tuberculosis. The judge decided that there was no evidence to show that Andrew had known of their diseased state and ordered Holmes to pay for the pigs, with the usual costs because he 'must consider that the defendant did make this purchase with his eyes open'.

By 1881, at 54, Andrew is still a baker and only George, the youngest child, is still at home. He is shown as a baker like his father. Ten years later and George, has moved out to become a baker elsewhere and the couple's oldest son, Ralph, a butcher, has returned home. There is also an eleven-year-old granddaughter called Elsie Marsh who is staying with them. Mary Ann died a year after the 1891 Census and Andrew, in spring 1893, re-married. His new bride was Sarah Horn, Ringstead born, but the widow of an Irthlingborough beer seller.

In spring 1895 there were high winds in the area and many houses were damaged. The Ringstead correspondent wrote in the *Northampton Mercury* on the 29th March:

> *In several cases the houses are practically unroofed. The thatched houses and other buildings, as might be expected, suffered considerably. A bakehouse chimney, belonging to Mr. Andrew Bull was blown down, smashing through the roof into the bedroom. Fortunately, no one happened to be in the room at the time, or the consequences might have been more serious*

Andrew's time was nearly up, however, and he died in 1896 and was buried on 26th June. In his will he left to his second wife:

> *. . . my plate, linen china glass books pictures furniture and other household effects with the exception of a chest containing two drawers at the bottom. The said chest I bequeath to my grandson Raymond Bull of Irthlingboro' Norths.*

He appointed John Knight as his sole executor with instructions to sell everything off and divide the money equally between his son George, now a baker in Irthlingborough and his daughter Eliza Mary Marsh of London. Of his two oldest children, Ralph had died in 1892 and Elizabeth who had been a drapers assistant in Newmarket, possibly died a year later.

By this time the industrialisation of food provided competition to the producers and in the High Street. In 1880 there were some 10,000 water and wind corn mills in Britain but by 1899 there were only around 2,000 left. The hard wheats from the New World together with the steam-driven roller mills drove most local mills out of business although the Ringstead windmill and water mills hung on longer than many.

In politics, in the middle of the century, the Corn Laws repeal had split the old Tory Party with the Peelite faction joining the Whigs to form the new Liberal Party, the right wing becoming the new Conservative Party. The 1867 Reform Act had given many working men in urban areas the vote and the 1884 Reform Act extended the vote to all men paying an annual rental of £10 or those holding land valued at £10. This meant that many men in Ringstead now had the vote and the Liberal Party had a Labour wing. Women were still excluded but we can see the influence of these changes in the local politics in the backgrounds of the people who later sat on the new Parish Councils, the attitude of some parents to the National School and the rise of industrial action culminating in the Raunds March.

Part of this working class movement was the growth of the Co-operative movement through the latter part of the century and as it came to a conclusion the Co-op made its appearance on the Ringstead High Street.

First we will look at the last of the individual Ringstead bakers before the new century. It seems likely that Joseph Scholes took over the bakery of John Childs. We see him in Kelly's Directory of 1890 alongside Andrew Bull. We can also note that George Wadsworth is listed as a miller at Ringstead Water Mill showing that local flour was probably still available.

Joseph was born in Stamford in about 1835 and had become a baker at Belvoir Castle in Leicestershire. He had married, aged 30, to Mary Ann Whyman on February 1866 in Oundle and we see that his first wife had died for he is a widower. His father was Richard Scholes who was also a baker. He is there in the 1871 Census with his second wife. As with most bakers there is a young apprentice living with them. Presumably he was baking for Belvoir Castle and would have been able to produce fine white bread as well as the wholemeal bread for the servants.

By 1881 Joseph has set up as a baker in his own right on the Higham Ferrers High Street. There is just one son, John Joseph, born in about 1873 at Belvoir. It seems that Joseph and family moved to Ringstead to take on John Child's bakery after his death. We know this because of a case in which Joseph was involved with, although it is a little confusing. It seems that after Higham he moved to Irthlingborough for a short period for he was there when he took on a workhouse apprentice from Bedford Union, called William Askew.

As part of the democratic political movement, which we have briefly mentioned, acts were passed by Parliament to improve the legal position of working men. In 1875 the *Employers and Workmen Act* put employers on an equal footing with their staff in a legal contract. Previous to this act only the workman, if he broke a contract, was subject to the criminal law and could be imprisoned or fined. This act laid down that both employer and workman were only subject to the penalties of the civil law in such a case.

In *The Register of Visits to Boys and Girls sent out as apprentices or servants from the Bedford Union Workhouse* it reports that:

> ASKEW, William, 13. *10 Dec 1884, Joseph SCHOLES, baker of Irthlingboro' bound 31 Jan 1885, term 5 years – in consequence of a complaint having been made by a gent. at Irthlingboro' that the boy was ill treated I went to see the lad who said he had no complaint but the case is a suspicious one. On 5th July 1886 Mr SCHOLES applied to have the Indrs. [Indentures] cancelled. On 28th August SCHOLES brought the boy before the Bd [Board] and said that he had no use for him in consequence of the impediment in his speech. The Bd told SCHOLES that he must keep him but they would endeavour to find him another situation. In consequence of information received I visited the lad and made enquiries at several places and found that without doubt the lad had been constantly ill treated. Steps were taken before the Magistrates at Thrapston and the Indrs [Indentures], were cancelled and his master fined heavily. Askew returned to the House 29 Oct 1886.*

Neither here nor in the court case report do we learn what this constant ill treatment amounted to but presumably it included beatings and physical force. It certainly does not shed a good light on Joseph Scholes, even accepting that William Askew was probably a difficult youngster, and his next employer, a blacksmith in Yelden, also had problems with him.

The report on the case at the Thrapston Petty Sessions on Tuesday November 23rd 1886 states that Joseph is a baker at Ringstead so it is probably in 1885 or 1886 that Joseph moved to Ringstead. He is still there in 1891 and 1901 at 2 High Street, next to the Post Office.

At 6 High Street is his son John Joseph, at 28 a journeyman baker, almost certainly working for his father, with his wife Martha and their two young daughters, Kathleen (4) and Rita (2). In spite of the numbering it seems most likely that this is 47/49 High Street and he took over the bakery from John Childs. Joseph died in early 1905 and John Joseph took over the family business. The 1911 Census shows us that of the three children that the couple had, only Kathleen aged 14, is still alive and she and her mother are shown as assistant bakers.

John Joseph Scholes with his baker's cart (1930s ?)

From the Ringstead picture archive held by Peter Davies

In the Ringstead cemetery is a large marble grave with the inscription:

> *In loving memory of our dear father John Joseph Scholes who passed away July 23rd 1945, aged 72 years. And Martha Jane Scholes who passed away March 9th 1946*.

It would appear that, by the end of the Nineteenth Century, there were two bakers for the village but perhaps it was not as simple as that. In September 1895 the Board of Guardians of Thrapston Union Workhouse accepted a series of food tenders. Among them was one for:

> *Mr. Betts, Ringstead, bread 3¼d., flour 10d. per stone;*

So there was a Betts in the bread trade at the end of the century as well as at the beginning but, as yet, I have not found how he fitted in. It is possible that he was a wholesaler rather than a baker himself.

The 1901 Census alerts us to another baker for at number 25 lived Robert Woodruff aged 57 from Riseley in Bedfordshire and his wife Sarah, also 57 and born in Raunds. He is shown as, 'baker Co-op

manager' Round the corner at 2 Chapel Road lived 19-year-old Lillian Mary Abbott whose occupation is given as a shop assistant in the Co-op stores.

The Co-operative movement probably started in Scotland in the eighteenth century but it was the Rochdale Pioneers who were the first successful example of working people getting together to set up a jointly owned shop . From the start it was also a political movement but its main aim was to provide unadulterated food at reasonable prices. We see this at a meeting of the Kettering District Cooperative Association at Desborough in October 1884:

> *Mr. Scotton, who was enthusiastically received, gave an instructive speech on how working men, by taking affairs into their own hands, might provide for themselves, and the good co-operation has done for the whole of the working classes throughout the whole country.*

The Desborough Co-operative Stores had started in 1864 so it is perhaps surprising that Ringstead did not form its own Co-operative Stores, which included a bakery, until 1894.

Ringstead High Street in 1920s. Girl is leaning against Co-op window (Londis 2013)

1920s postcard. Author's own copy

The first manager, as we have seen, was Robert Woodruff, who had been born in about 1842 in Riseley in Bedfordshire. By 1871 he was a baker, living with his widowed mother in High Street, Raunds. He married Elizabeth Ann Green in 1877 but she died just two years later and in 1881 he is still a baker, staying with his mother-in-law, Ann Green who was a sixty-eight year old widow living in Rotton Row , Raunds.

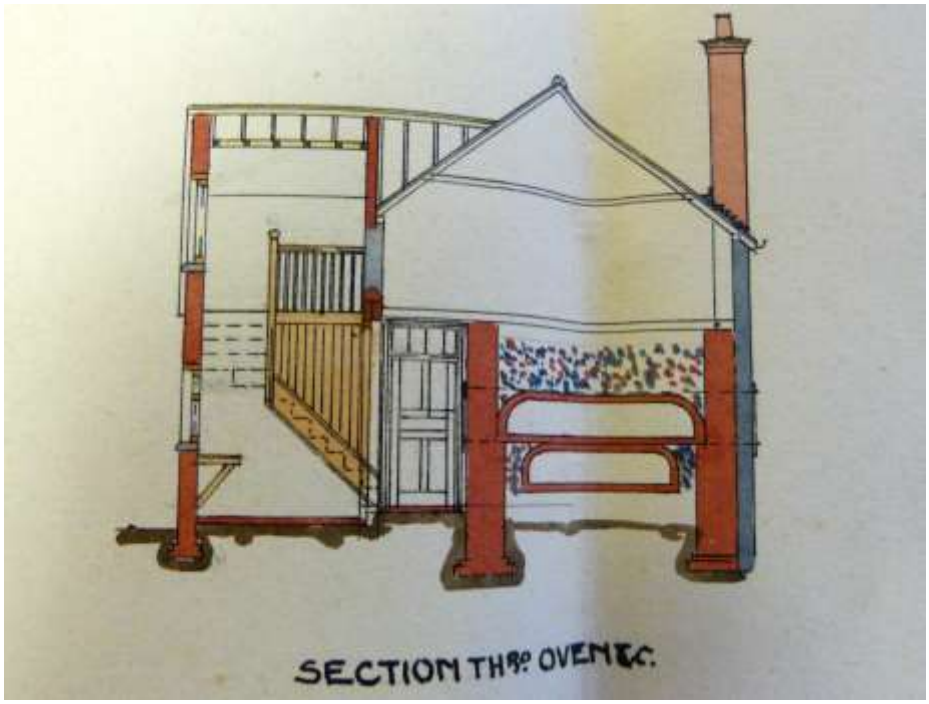
He married again to Sarah Pentelow (nee Brown), the widow of a wealthy Raunds farmer, John Pentelow, who had had 300 acres and employed ten men and two boys. 1891 finds the couple in High Street, Raunds. Robert is 49 and Sarah is 48 years old and, living with them are Sarah's four children, aged 9 to 15 from her first marriage.

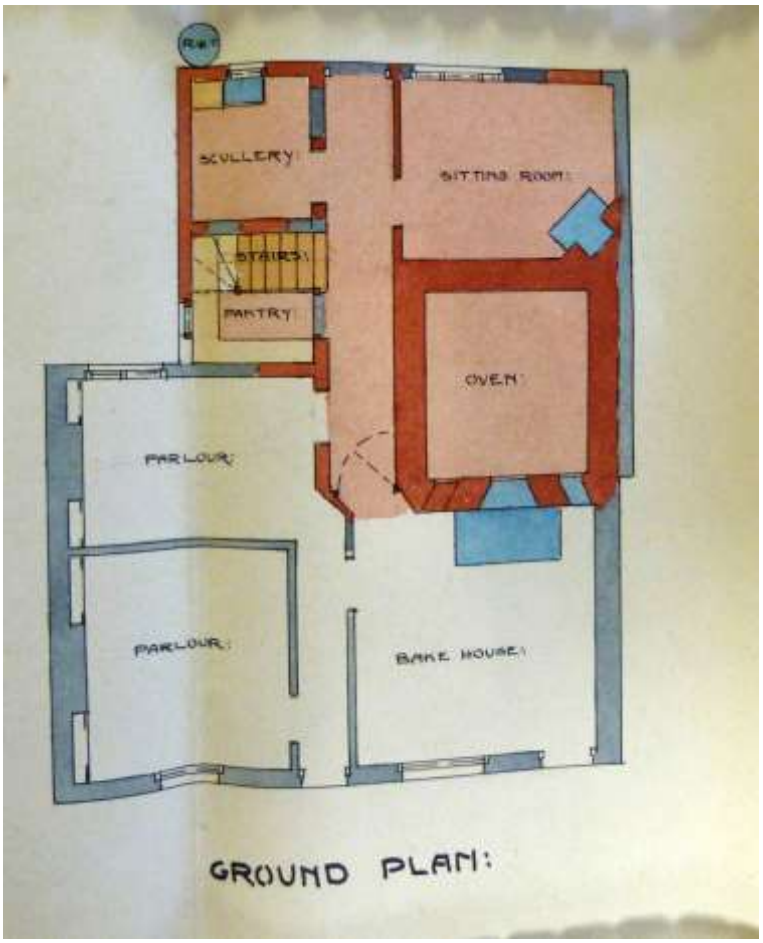
One would have thought that Robert was well set up with a bakehouse and presumably married to a rich widow. If this was the case, something changed for by 1901 the couple, with Helen, their eldest daughter, 25 and unmarried, are living at 25 High Street, Ringstead and he is the Co-op manager. Just over a year later Robert died and by 1911 Sarah is living with her 59 year old unmarried brother, a farmer in Walgrave. Also living there are her unmarried sister and widowed brother, all in their sixties.

As an aside, Robert was probably the 'Mr. Woodroffe' that Mr David Ramsay, M.B. M.R.C.S., the doctor from Raunds was attending on December 7th 1901. After visiting Robert the doctor called on another patient and while there was consulted by someone with an abscess in his foot. The doctor operated but in the process the knife slipped and the point went in the, 'principal joint of the forefinger, causing a slight but deep wound'. At the time he did little about it but when he returned home he bled and disinfected the wound, but it was too late. He was almost immediately in pain and despite the attentions of various local doctors and constant nursing he died on Monday 6th January 1902. We tend to forget how the discovery of antibiotics has changed our attitude to many infections.

In 1901 a John Kingsmith had ordered some plans from Wellingborough architects, Talbot, Brown and Fisher, to improve a bakehouse in Ringstead. John Kingsmith (originally King Smith) was from Raunds where he had grown up with his widowed mother Keziah Smith and his siblings. In 1861, aged 19 he was a rough stuff cutter and his older brother Owen was a clicker. His mother had been an Infant School Teacher but by this time was only a 'Housekeeper'. Lodging with them is Cornelius Steven aged 52, a shoe manufacturer born in Louth. Was he part of the reason for their rise to be manufacturers also? It seems unlikely for he married on the Isle of Wight in 1865 and the next two Censuses show him as a Schoolmaster living with his wife in Peterborough. Whatever the reason, by 1901 John Kingsmith, as he was now, was a Government Contractor, living with his second wife Mary Ellen. He had given generously to Raunds Parish Church and had also been a trustee of the Raunds Methodist Church. He had also been one of the employers who had agreed to pay the statement prices for piece work and as a result his workers continued to work during the Raunds Strike in 1905. He also gave £5 for the relief fund and promised to pay in ten shillings a week for the duration of the strike.

Why was he getting plans drawn up for a bakehouse in Ringstead? Was he the landlord or was he possibly doing it as part of his good works for the Ringstead Co-operative Society. We must remember that this was still a self funded group: Part of a big movement but not part of a large organisation. We may discover the real truth later but the house rooms may indicate that it was not the Co-operative Bakery. The plans show the building as it is and suggests two possible ways of increasing the size of the bakehouse. It does therefore give us some idea of what a bakehouse would have looked like for the latter part of the nineteenth century.





Drawings of Bakehouse before alterations

Talbot, Brown and Fisher October 29th 1901 (NRO. TBF 221)
With the kind permission of Northampton Record Office

Ringstead High Street in 1920s

Post Office now moved to its present (2013) site and Co-op with bread cart outside. The milk cart is moving away. Is the woman with the buckets delivering milk or carrying water from the pump?
With the kind permission of Vivienne Marshall

The same Co-op Bread Delivery Cart in 2013? (I think the roof is up on the postcard).
With the kind permission of Mr. Gaunt
Authors own photograph 3rd August 2013

The century had seen bread move from being the main sustainer of life for many working, and pauper families, to being a part of their diet, if still an important part.

We are now into living memory and there are still a few people who recall the two bakers' shops and the Sunday ritual of taking the Sunday joint to one or other of them to have it roasted in the bread oven. Stan Attley, who was born in 1918 was recorded by the Anchors Away Youth Group in 1998, telling of his childhood:

> *All food was cooked over an open fire – fried or boiled. The Sunday dinner was taken round to the bake house to be cooked, also cakes and pies etc.: and it cost 2d. There were two bake houses in the village.*

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Chapter Seven

Passing Strangers

Tabitha Boswell (c1704 – 1784) and others

In the high-ceilinged space in the Ringstead church tower where the bellringers stand, a cluster of plaques line the walls. The church nave is almost empty of memorials but here they are, behind a curtain, among the dust and the cobwebs. Most of the plaques are to local churchmen and notables. High in one corner, partly hidden by the vertical ladder to the belfry is a rough-edged rectangle of blue-veined marble. It is impossible to read completely without chancing the climb up the ladder but by enlarging a digital photograph and comparing it with the original hymn lyric by Isaac Watts and the Northamptonshire Family History Society transcription we can see what is written there:

In Memory of
TABITHA BOSWELL
who died
Jan^{ry} 5th 1784.
Aged 80 Years.
"Death like an overflowing stream,
Sweeps us away. Our life's a dream,
An empty tale: a Morning flow'r
Cut down and withered in an hour."

Tabitha Boswell's memorial plaque is in the corner partly hidden by the ladder

Author's photograph 15th October 2012

The words of Isaac Watts were more commonly seen and heard in the Nonconformist chapels than an Anglican church but there is a more unusual fact about this memorial that we discover when we look in the Parish Burial Register. There we see:

> *Tabitha Boswell an old gypsie January 10th 1784*

The previous entry, for December 28th 1783 is for' Esther Boswell, a young Gypsie'. A little later the Registers also record the burial of "Sara Nichols, gypsey, reputed wife of J. a Chelsea Pensioner". There is also, on the 26th March 1801, the burial of Mary Bosworth, alias Bozeat, widow who is almost certainly a gypsy.

The gypsies were a regular part of the English roads and byways until after the middle of the Twentieth Century. Their caravans or 'vardos', still mainly horse-drawn would be seen along the lanes of Northamptonshire or parked in a lay-by, the washing hung out to dry on the bushes nearby. Hidden away in the quiet corners of the countryside.

The origins of this mysterious race were widely discussed in the early nineteenth century. It had been once thought that these travelling people were from Egypt and this resulted in their name which is a corruption of 'Egyptians'. By the nineteenth century, the modern view was emerging that the race had started out from north-west India, now Pakistan, possibly driven further west by Tamburlaine in about 1400 although it may be that these tribes had had a semi-nomadic existence for thousands of years.

They spread westward through Europe and the original Hindi dialect gained words from the countries in which they settled and passed through so that a distinct Romani language emerged. They also intermarried with the local peoples and coined new words. Writing in 1838, William Howitt states:

> *The names by which they have been, or are, known in different countries are various. They call themselves Romi, Manusch and Gadzi, each of these appellatives being connected to a different language – the Copt, the Sanscrit and the Celtic. . . .But the most ancient and generic name is that of the Sinte, or inhabitants of the Sinde or Indus.*

As they moved into Western Europe they were treated as exotic celebrities at first but then were often persecuted and driven out. Howitt tells us of this experience in Britain:

> *At first they were received as princes and kings and excited commiseration by the tale of their injuries. They had royal and parliamentary passes granted them, to go through the country seeking relief, as many of the parish records yet bear testimony. So late as 1647 there appears an entry in the constable's accounts at Uttoxeter in Staffordshire, of four shillings being given to forty-six Egyptians travelling with a pass from parliament to seek relief by the space of four months. But when this delusion was past, and it was seen that they had no intention of quitting the country they became persecuted by justices of the peace and parish constables as thieves and vagrants; and the rapid enclosure of waste lands during the war tended greatly to break up their haunts and put them in great straits.*

We have seen in other life stories that during the nineteenth century England changed with new roads, railways, police forces and communications. Perhaps most important was the move from the commons and open places which were enclosed and fenced. They had developed circuits to find produce, work and trade throughout the year but now many of the places where they camped or gathered food were denied them and they came into conflict with farmers and the new

constabulary. It must be remembered that in 1530 Parliament had passed a law which declared that being a gypsy or associating with a Gypsy was punishable by death and many were hanged and others deported. Although it largely fell into disuse, that law was only repealed in 1783, less than a year before the death of Tabitha Boswell.

In the story of the police constables we saw that some wandered the parish in plain clothes in order to discover and move on 'vagrants'. Certainly there was strong opposition from many people to the gypsies. One writer, writing in the *Stamford Mercury* on 30th August 1822 stated bitterly:

> *I believe the generality of Gipsies to be ignorant and hardened and wicked enough for any crime. Having been brought up on a spot much frequented by them, I know something of their character and manner of living. In the first place, they neither fear God, nor regard man; therefore it is no wonder that they should, as I verily believe they do, snare more hares, rabbits and pheasants; steal more sheep and lambs; rob more hen roosts and orchards; and finally steal more hay than all the villagers in the country besides; to say nothing about burglaries and highway robberies.*

John Hoyland however, writing in 1816, asserts that true gypsies preferred meat which had not been killed by the hand of man, perhaps a relic of their Hindu past, so would eat carrion and animals which had been killed by natural causes. This may be why John Clare is his poem, 'The Gypsy Camp' describes that:

> *There stinking mutton roasts upon the coals,*

Hoyland was told that farmers in Northamptonshire found gypsies did not commit any 'depredations on their property, unless it was in pilfering wood from the fences'.

With their knowledge of herbs it is possibly true that they did hurry some animals to their deaths but their reputation for being thieves and vagabonds was probably exaggerated. It was an easy option to lay the blame on them but, like most stereotypes, it had a grain of truth in it. They had to use their wits to survive and the patter and ruses needed to part people from their money sometimes led to deceit and theft.

The gypsy women had long made money by telling fortunes on doorsteps and in fairground booths. They were making use of their differentness. Writing in the middle of the Twentieth Century, Brian Vesey Fitzgerald tells of one such trick:

> ***Hokano baro** is practised all over the world, with modifications to suit the country, and has been described by almost every writer on Gypsies. In its standardized form it consists of three parts. Firstly getting into the house of the dupe, or, if that is not essential into his or her confidence (this is generally achieved by fortune-telling, but it may be done by means of offering cheap goods for sale or even by plain begging.) Second the removal of the property. Thirdly, the binding of the victim by oath, not to say anything about it, for three or four weeks.*

The Gypsy Palmist

Late Nineteenth or early Twentieth Century. Place unknown.
With the kind permission of The Skeptiseum (www.skeptiseum.org)

I have not found an example of this in Ringstead but in researching the early life of John Thomas Collett, the wayward Baptist pastor, who was born in Guyhirn, near Wisbech, I found the following article from the *Cambridge Chronicle* quoted in the *Northampton Mercury* of 20th January 1849:

> *GUYHIRN, - EXTRAORDINARY CREDULITY. – Soon after Michaelmas last a gipsy woman called upon the wife of a labouring man, residing near Guyhirn, and offered upon receiving certain considerations, to impart a grand secret, and to disclose a certain spot near her house where numerous bags of gold were deposited. The poor woman's curiosity was excited; and anxious to get possession of the hidden wealth, she complied with the required conditions, and accordingly placed in the hands of the gipsy first a shilling, then a sovereign, and some article of wearing apparel, and even her wedding ring; but these were not considered sufficient, and a pawnbroker's ticket for a watch, which had been pledged nearly twelve months since, was offered; but she was informed that the spell could not be accomplished until the dupe had borrowed 27s. upon the ticket. She obtained the money of a neighbouring shopkeeper, promising at the same time that he would receive, in a few days, double the amount of the loan; this money was also handed over to the gipsy, who after many signs and gibberish expressions called for two forks, one of which was stuck in the floor in the corner of the house and the other on the outside of the house; and after carefully covering them with a shawl, departed leaving strict injunctions that no one should touch them until her return, otherwise*

the charm would be broken. In this state matters remained for nearly three months, the credulous woman having been in daily expectation of again meeting the gipsy, but alas! In vain; and this week her husband sent her to the sergeant of police at Elm, to whom she told the above tale, and requested that he would adopt some means by which they might be enabled to recover the property so foolishly parted with.

Most families or groups of gypsies would have had regular circuits which they travelled following the work, the sources of food and the seasons. The winter would have been a bad time for gipsies and it may be no coincidence that Tabitha and Esther died in late December and early January. An abnormally hot summer in 1784 was followed by a severe winter with heavy snow and almost continual frost from late December to late February 1784. Any burial would also have been very difficult in the open fields. Many Gypsies would overwinter in urban areas, gathering together in larger groups. It must be remembered that for much of the nineteenth century the gypsies did not travel in the richly painted vardos but in tents and often with little protection from the elements.

These 'rod' or 'bender' tents made of wooden rods pushed into holes in the ground were held together at the top and covered with some sort of material. Stones were placed around the bottom to stop the wind getting under the covering and sometimes a hole made at the top to let out the smoke from the cooking fire. In really bad weather it could be a miserable, life-threatening existence. In 1816 John Hoyland published *A historical survey of the customs, habits, & present state of the Gypsies: designed to develope the origin of this singular people, and to promote the amelioration of their condition.* Some of his research was in Northamptonshire and he tells of one visit to a Gypsy camp:

. . . the author visited an encampment of Gypsies. It consisted of five tents, situated near Rushden, within two miles of the pleasant town of Higham Ferrers. He did not reconnoitre the camp till about mid-day, having been informed that by this time it was probable, the able-bodied persons of both sexes would be drawn off to a feast and a fair in different situations, not very distant. It proved so; there were only two women, three children, and an infant remaining in the tents which were the residences of several branches of the numerous families of Smith and Loversedge, names well known in the county of Northampton.

The head of the former, has been for many years a dealer in asses or donkies; and is reputed to be possessed of some property. His wife, more than eighty years of age was seated at the entrance of one of the tents, weaving a cabbage net. The other woman, who was middle-aged, was nursing an infant; and the eldest of the children, about twelve years of age, was making preparation for washing; a pan was suspended from three poles, under which she had kindled a fire to boil water. The very tattered and squalid appearance of this poor girl was truly affecting.

On conversing with the old woman, she said she had forty grand-children; some gone to the feast, others to the fair; and she signified that both men and women were musical performers.

. . . she said they endured great hardship in winter having no shelter but their tents in the worst of the weather.

Hoyland then recounts:

The last winter but one, a company of these houseless wanderers were dug out of the snow in Ditchford Lane near Irchester, Northamptonshire, when it appeared one woman had been lying-in and that one old man was dying.

There was a tradition of music making among the gypsies both as a way of enjoying themselves but also as a way of making money on their travels. John Clare, in his younger 'tramping' days, was a keen song collector and fiddle player. He had learnt to play the fiddle from John Grey who was a member of the "Boswell crew" and, when he had become a "decent scraper", played, danced and drank with the "Smiths gang". Mr John Hales, who for 55 years was the sexton of Castor, some twenty miles to the north-east of Ringstead, told of the Castor Feast in the 1840s.

Gipsies used to come with their fiddles and tambourines and provide the music for all the villages of the district. If the feasts were not on they would occasionally play in the streets like a German band. As many as sixty would appear at Castor Feast. They encamped on the heath.

This tradition has continued into the present day with singers like Wiggy Smith, in the Gloucester area, recording a repertoire of traditional songs mixed with Country and Western and pop songs from the past. It seems likely that this would have been the pattern in the nineteenth century with a mixture of ballads and sentimental songs.

Howitt, writing in 1838, describes meeting up with a gang of gypsies. He tells how the men kept to themselves but that the women greeted you, hoping to 'lay hold of your money under pretence of telling your fortune'. He then goes on to describe the look and dress of these young women:

The women, many of them, in their youth, are fine strapping figures, with handsome brown faces and most brilliant and speaking eyes – they have a peculiar poco-curante air and jaunty gait, and are extremely fond of finery. Their costume is unique, and pretty uniform, - scarlet cloaks, black velvet bonnets with large white pukes trimmed with lace; a handkerchief thrown over the head under the bonnet, and tied beneath the chin; long pendant earrings, black stockings, and ankle boots. So far from shunning any intercourse or inquiries, they approach you with a ready smile and a style of flattery peculiar to them. "A good-day to you, sir; your honour is born to fortune. I see that by the cast of your countenance. It was a right lucky planet that shone on your honour's birth!" If you know anything of their language, and they are only too glad to talk to you in it. Accost a gipsy with "Shaushan Palla?" "how do you, brother?" – and you will see the effect.*

**nonchalant.*

Gypsy bender tent and camp

From Beauties of the English Landscape. By Birket Foster (1874)

Author's own copy

As we have said, the gypsies had their usual annual circuits and there are a few pieces of evidence to show that Ringstead was part of at least one of these rounds. In *Ringstead People* we told of the trial of William Weekley Ball for the alleged murder of Lydia Attley in 1850. When, in March 1864 further bodies were unearthed at the same spot where Lydia's supposed body had earlier been found, the *Northampton Mercury* reported:

> *The truth, in fact, has oozed out that Ringstead open-field was greatly frequented by gypsies, who ordinarily buried their dead there. The practice was carried on to such an extent that fifty years ago legal steps were taken to check it. . .*

I have not found these 'legal steps' but could it be that these attempts to stop the burying in the open fields had led to the burial of Tabitha and Esher in the churchyard? The *Mercury* goes on to tell of another traveller who passed that way in 1864.

. . . There was always a track way across the field from Denford to Keystone – though almost impassable in bad weather up to a very recent period. At the point where Lydia Atley was supposed to have been buried it takes the form of a letter S reversed. Nearly opposite the spot is a large tree, beneath which a gipsy family are not unlikely to have pitched their tent and which may have served them as a land-mark to their last resting place. About a fortnight ago a somewhat strange accident occurred there. A wandering tinker travelling homeward to Oundle having made himself over comfortable with Thrapstone ale, missed his way and found himself in the Denford and Keystone lane. The night was intensely dark, and all things considered it is scarcely surprising that he should not have been able to follow the sinuousities of the lane. In point of fact he tumbled into the grave from which the skeleton had been recently taken, and there he slept the night through.

We see that the area had been a routeway for travelling peoples of all types and it is important to stress that the English Gypsies were just one group who travelled the countryside. The Irish Tinkers, for example, although possibly connected to the Gypsies, and often intermarried with them, were a distinct race with their own language called Shelta. Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald makes clear:

They follow the same way of life; are smiths, horse-dealers, fortune tellers; have many of their [Gypsy] customs. They are not just Irishmen who have taken to the road. They are a race.

An editorial on gypsies in the *Western Gazette* on 16th January 1891 gives a partial list of some of the itinerants:

The people who roam over the country during the summer as proprietors of travelling shows, horse dealers, tinkers, Cheap Jacks, pottery dealers, sellers of skewers and hawkers of baskets, fortune sellers, and keepers of cock-shies at fairs and races.

The one trade not mentioned here is the selling of clothes pegs, which, although a gypsy stereotype, continued into the second half of the Twentieth Century. Originally the pegs would have been made from split peeled willow bound with hazel bark. By the end of the century, instead of the hazel they used old biscuit tins, the paper labels burnt off, flattened and polished with moss and earth and then cut into thin strips and wrapped round the top of the peg and secured with a single small nail. They were most commonly made by the men, or sometimes the whole family, and it was the women who did the selling, some door-to-door, but mainly to the shops. Some Gypsies also made and sold willow baskets. Did they get the willow and hazel from along the Nene? Was that why Tabitha and Esther were in Ringstead that winter in 1783/4?

Other wanderers would have included young labourers and others ‘on the tramp’ looking for work, higglers and other travelling sellers, vagabonds and tramps. There was a tendency to lump them all together as Gypsies which is why, for a time the term ‘Gypsy’ was seen as a term of abuse.

I have not found a Romani name for Ringstead but Northampton was called *Choko-mengreskey gav* (Shoemakers’ Town). Hidden in the censuses we do see evidence of Ringstead as being in these circuits. One travelling family, the Hernes (or Hurns or Hearns) appear in the Censuses in Gloucestershire and Staffordshire but we see from the birth places of the children that they had been in Northamptonshire. We find the family together with the Smiths and sometimes Boswells on Rodborough Common, near Stroud in Gloucestershire in 1861, at Newent in the same county ten years later and at Bloxwich, Walsall in 1881. The names and the places of birth do vary and there are some mistakes, perhaps due to the Census collector but we do see a sort of pattern emerging. The 1871 Census gives the greatest details and it shows:

Edmund Herne	*50*	*H*	*Easton Northants (possibly Easton-on-the-Hill near Stamford*
Jemima Herne	*55*	*W*	*Staughton, Leics.(Little Storton [Staughton], Beds 1881)*
Alice Smith	*35*	*stepd*	*Thurning, Northants*
Zippereta Herne	*21*	*son*	***Ringstead,*** *Northants*
Treinte Herne	*18*	*dau*	*Peterborough, Lincs.*
Urania Herne	*16*	*dau*	*Market Deeping, Lincs.*
Manfield Herne	*12*	*son*	*Welford, Northants*
Madonna Smith	*16*	*?*	*Lutton, Northants*
Caleb Herne	*23*	*son*	*Leighton, Hunts (probably Leighton Bromswold)*

There is some confusion here for when we look in the Ringstead Parish Registers we find that Edward and Jemima Hearne had a daughter baptised Zepporah Hearne on 15th September 1850 (and a Matilda baptised a week later). When we look in the 1861 Census we find the family on Rodborough Common near Stroud and Zepreta, aged ten years is a daughter. By 1881 the 30 year old daughter born in Ringstead is called Cudnet (or similar). Whether these differences are due to the Census Collector's trouble with the Hearne's accent or their deliberate misleading of him is impossible to tell, although much of the information given seems to be correct. She (or he) disappears from the 1891 and 1901 Censuses although it is possible that she is the May Ann Hearn at Carmarthen Lunatic Asylum in 1901. It is certainly a possibility that she is the Sippert Hearn a single woman aged 61 and born in Kingsthorpe, Northamptonshire who is in Glamorgan County Asylum in Bridgend in the 1911 Census. We know that some of her siblings moved west into the Glamorgan area and there is enough phonetic similarity in the names and birthplace to make it a possibility.

In the 1881 Census, when they are in Bloxwich, John Hurn (who is probably Edmund Herne), Jemima and family are in a tent as are four of the five families on the site but Samuel Hurn and his wife are in a 'Gipsy Waggon'. It is only at about this time that the vardo or wagon began to take over from the bender tent and this change would have put certain areas out of easy reach and made them more visible on the fenced roadsides. We see that the Herne family had wandered the lanes of Northamptonshire and the adjoining counties but had then moved west for some reason. Was it that the more pastoral counties provided better conditions with the increasing move to arable fields in the east?

Certainly we see evidence of them being harried in the Ringstead area. The *Northampton Mercury* for 11th February 1860 reports:

> *Vagrancy. – Tito Smith and Cornelius Smith, gypsies, were charged by William Hebber, sergeant of police, with camping on the public highway, in the parish of Raunds. It appeared that the defendants, with 14 or 15 females and children, were encamped in the road leading from Higham Station to Ringstead, but it being shown that they did so under the impression that they could with the permission of the owner of the adjoining lane (Mr. Harrison), who admitted that he had given it, the magistrates discharged them on payment of 5s.6d. costs, at the same time warning them that no proprietor had a right to give such permission, and that if they offended again they would be severely punished.*

Towards the end of the century 'George Smith of Coalville' and others began to propose ways to ameliorate the gypsies' lot, concentrating particularly on the children. In May 1887 he wrote to the *Northampton Mercury*, proclaiming:

> *It is time the hand of civilisation opened a crevice into the – with some noble exceptions – many thousands of dark abodes that are being moved to and fro before our eyes to let a ray of light upon the tent and van dwellers and their children to guide them Heavenward.*

Some five years later, on November 12th 1892, he wrote to the *Northampton Mercury* telling of his Movable Dwellings Bill. He deplored the attitude of the van dwellers who had met at Rotherham and opposed his Bill:

> *They are to be pitied in their attempts to prevent the nineteenth century civilisation and heavenly light from entering the gipsy and van children's hearts, heads and homes. I say again for the thousandth time that the sole object of the Movable Dwellings Bill are (1) to open the school doors to all gypsy and van children of every class, kith, kin and colour by a free pass-book on simple, easy workable lines; (2) to give the sanitary and educational officers similar power over van and tent-dwellers, and their abodes to that they now have over house-dwellers, and their homes and no more – less I cannot accept; and (3) by the registration of their vans in a manner analogous to the Canal Boats Act I promoted of 1874 and 1884 – at a cost of 5s. every three years.*

This paternalistic interference was strongly objected to by many gypsies who believed that his description of gypsies might apply to other travelling folk with whom he was confusing them. Shooba Eskroe Rye wrote to the *Morning Post* in October 1882:

> *The general impression given by his speeches is that he does not know a gipsy when he sees one. Any travelling tinker, or seller of brushes or wandering tramp seems to pass with him as a gipsy and to form a subject for a screed of abuse.*

In the *Western Gazette* on 16th January 1891 another, George Smith, who was 'King of the Gypsies', answered the 'George Smith of Coalville' and 'his attack on our liberties'. He states:

> *I personally know all the gypsies and showmen of England and I am bold to assert that, in health and morality, their lives will bear favourable comparison with either that of 'GEORGE SMITH of Coalville' himself or those of his slum-dwellers. Many members of the House of Lords and of the House of Commons have been in my tent and those of other Gypsies and can speak to their cleanliness.*

The editorial comment on this letter goes on to comment favourably on the improved behaviour of many of the travellers. It still asserts, however, that the children should be allowed the advantages of an elementary education.

Photograph of Gypsy 'Vardo' or Wagon in Ditchford Lane. By Vic Childs (mid 20th Century).

With the kind permission of the Eric Fowells Collection

A case at Wellingborough Divisional Petty Sessions in November 1903 gives some idea of the attitude of the authorities and charities to the Gypsies:

> *Luke Parker, Margaret Parker, and Lemio Parker, gipsies, were charged with exposing and neglecting their children at Great Harrowden. – Mr. James Jackson prosecuted on behalf of the N.S.P.C.C.C... – The case against the last-named defendant was first taken. It was stated and supported in evidence by Inspector Rushton of Northampton, that the defendant, with his wife and two children, who were travelling about the country, were in the neighbourhood of Hardwick on Friday last, when a babe was born and the family pitched a camp in Green-lane Harrowden. Their only shelter was some rough sacking over some hedge stakes, the whole enclosure being about four feet square. There on some loose hay, the mother and newly-born child had to lie, and the whole surroundings were as damp and miserable as could be imagined. The other two children were in a shockingly dirty and neglected state, and the whole family appeared numbed with cold, the weather being very bad. There was only a little bread and condensed milk in the way of food to be found. The family remained in that place till Sunday when Inspector Rushton had the mother and child removed to the Workhouse. – The Bench in sentencing the accused to six months' hard labour, said that on a previous occasion his wife had a child born on a common, the child being found dead. At that time he was told that if such a thing occurred again he would be severely dealt with. The Bench regarded the case as very serious. – The evidence against the other defendants was much similar. In this case the defendants had a nine months old child and another four years old. They were all in a separate enclosure but the conditions were the same. – The male*

> *defendant was sent to gaol for two months with hard labour, and the female was discharged.*

It seems evident that something needed to be done but one can only wonder, if it had happened some six weeks later, if the bitter irony of the situation would have been recognized by the court.

The history of the gypsies and other travelling people is complex. What we see in the nineteenth century is the same ambivalent attitude that we have today. Alongside the persecution we see in the village halls and churches and fields the children singing a 'Gypsy Roundel'(Ringstead), or a brass band playing the 'Gipsy Bride', of the Wesleyan Chapel having a meat teas 'served on the grass, 'gipsy fashion' (Higham Ferrers). William Howitt writing in 1838 had been accosted by young upper-class women pretending to be gypsies as a 'frolic'.

Ringstead would have likewise been split between those who were glad to see the back of the gypsies' begging, and petty thieving and others would have seen them as a romantic reminder of the times when men and women were free to roam the countryside. I have often wondered if the Book of Genesis recalls a folk memory of the change from hunter gatherers to settled farmers and Eden was that lost world before Eve discovered the knowledge of seed-sowing and people were tied to the drudgery of survival. Writing in 1838, William Howitt summed up this dual standard:

> *The picture of the Rural Life of England must be woefully defective which should omit those singular and most picturesque squatters on heaths and in lanes, the Gipsies. They make part and parcel of the landscape scenery of England. They are an essential portion of our poetry and literature. They are moulded into our memories and all our associations of the country but the surprise of our first seeing them, by the stories of their cunning, their petty larcenies, their fortune telling and by the writings of almost all our best poets and essayists.*

John Clare called them, 'A quiet, pilfering, unprotected race'.

Many of the old ways have now disappeared but the difficult moral problems we *gorgios* still have to confront in our dealings with the travelling folk still remain.

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My thanks also to Kay Collins and the Rushdenheritage website for help with the Gypsy wagon photograph.

"A Gypsy Encampment" in Ringstead Group Fancy Dress Competition (Twentieth Century)
With the kind permission of Peter Davies custodian of the Ringstead photograph archive

Chapter Eight

Gypsies? A Postscript

Martha Jane Beeby (nee Gunn) (1867 - 1913)

Browsing the shelves of a Cambridgeshire Library I came across a book by John Bell called *More Crimes of Cambridgeshire*. On the cover was a picture of some gypsy caravans. As I was at that time researching the gypsies who passed through the Ringstead area I looked for the chapter which the cover photograph illustrated. The story was about a Martha Jane Beeby and as Beeby was a common name in the parishes around Ringstead I decided to research a little further.

Martha Jane Gunn had been born in 1867 in Denford, the daughter of Thomas Gunn, horsekeeper, and his wife Emma. In 1885 she married a local man Charles Leonard Robinson Beeby. Leonard, as he was usually called, became a brickmaker living with Martha at 17 High Street, Desborough. By 1891 the couple had three children, Charles, who was an invalid, George and Florence.

At some time in the next ten years something blew the family apart. I can find neither Leonard nor Martha, nor their eldest son, Charles in the 1901 Census. The second son, George, now aged 13 is living with his grandparents in Kettering and Florence is the adopted daughter of Fred Asbrey, a shoemaker and his wife Lavinia and living in Broughton near Kettering.

What had happened to the couple? According to John Bell, in his book, Martha had gone off with the gypsies and had then been abandoned. I have not found out the source which justified the fine photograph on his front cover. What we do know is that by 1911 Leonard, now 52, is back living with his widowed mother, Emma Beeby. Was it possible that the couple both decided to leave their home and children but that they fell out and Leonard returned home?

Whatever the circumstances, Martha Jane appears in the 1911 Census for The Green, Brampton near Huntingdon. It is later events which tell us that she is our woman although in the Census she is Martha Ann Seekings, aged 44, living with her 'husband' Fredrick [sic] Seekings. He is a farm worker and some five years her junior. John Bell states that he was of 'limited intellect'. Also staying with them is John Beeby a nephew, (or who believes that he is a nephew). He is fourteen years old and also a farm worker.

Some two years later, on Monday 28th July 1913, Brampton Feast was held. Fred had been at work until 8pm. He then went to the Bell Inn and was there with Martha until closing time. We learn, from the press coverage of the events that followed, that the couple had been living in Brampton for a number of years as man and wife. At closing time, the couple, who had been quarrelling, made their way home accompanied by a Mr Stocker, whose main concern seems to have been the good name of the Bell Inn. On the way back to their house, at about 10.30 pm, Martha was pushed and fell into a ditch. Stocker pulled her out (Abrahams also stated that he had pulled her out) and stayed with them a further quarter of a mile along the road and left them walking side-by-side towards their home. A Mrs Favell, whose cottage was nearby, heard the couple quarrelling and, when her husband returned home from the feast with Mr Abrahams and his wife, the two men, with Abraham's bicycle lamp went to investigate. They found the couple lying together by the roadside. Seekings had his arm under Martha. Looking closer Favell saw that Martha was very white and he saw in the lamplight that she was covered in blood. He got Abrahams to go for the police and he remained.

Fred Seekings who had been muttering now became aggressive but the constable arrived. He examined Martha and found that her throat had been cut, almost from ear to ear, and she was indeed dead.

After the inquest Fred Seekings was charged with Martha's murder. He had said at first that she had taken his knife and done it herself and her nephew certainly gave evidence that she had twice threatened suicide when drunk. Dr. MacRitchie, who examined the body which had been laid out upon a table in Seekings' house, stated that there were two cuts and he was of the opinion that it could not have been self-inflicted. Fred Seekings' other defence that he was too drunk to know what he was doing , or to remember anything, was also not accepted and he was found guilty and sentenced to death.

On Tuesday 4th November 1913 at 8 o'clock in the morning, Frederick was hung at Cambridge Gaol in a small 'execution shed'. He had slept well and put on a stone in weight during his time in prison. At his death he was 161 pounds and was given a drop of 6ft 3ins. He always maintained he had been too drunk to know what he had done but he paid great attention to the chaplain's ministrations and went to the scaffold with a quiet dignity.

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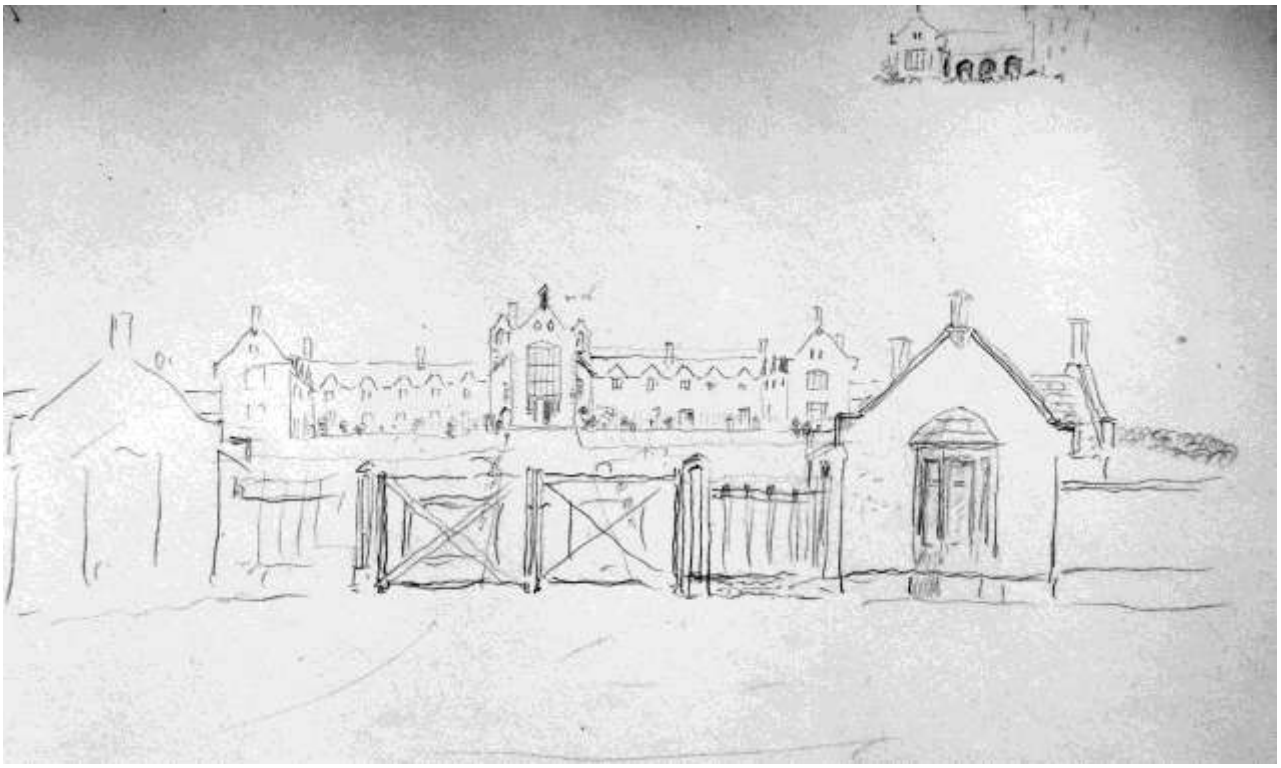
Chapter Nine

Workhouse Lives

Henry Atley. Louisa Tomlin (Cobley), Jane Weekley etc

Fear of the Workhouse loomed over the lives of working class families throughout much of the Nineteenth Century. Some Ringstead people found themselves in Thrapston Union Workhouse and I told a few of their stories. First there is a brief introduction to the Thrapston Union Workhouse and the Ringstead Gift Charity as I do not think that there has been a history of them yet written.



Thrapston Union Workhouse.

Sketch by George Clarke June 23rd 1847
With the kind permission of Northampton Record Office

The Thrapston Union Workhouse

At the beginning of the Nineteenth Century many villages and towns had their own parish workhouse, sometimes just an ordinary cottage set aside for the purpose. The Parliamentary Report of 1777 recorded workhouses in Denford, Raunds and Thrapston so that it seems that that there was not a workhouse in the village of Ringstead itself.

From 1601 a Parish Overseer had been appointed annually who could levy a poor rate to look after the sick and old, often in their own homes, and provide work for the able-bodied. Increasingly this

latter group were touted around the parish for work on the local farms, their wages subsidised from the poor rate.

This system became a subsidy for the farmers and tended to depress wages for ordinary labourers or make it more difficult for them to find work. It also became increasingly expensive, especially in the agricultural depression following the end of the Napoleonic Wars. A Government Commission was set up and all the parishes in the country were consulted, perhaps for the first time. Unfortunately the Commission's recommendations came out before much of this evidence had been received back.

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 was the result. Poor Law Commissioners were appointed to combine the more than 13,000 parishes into 573 'Unions' and new workhouses were built to serve them.

The Thrapston Poor Law Union came into being on 30th November 1835 with 26 constituent parishes. By 1836 the Union Workhouse site was agreed on the Denford Road. The architect, William J. Donthorn designed many workhouses in the area based on the model cruciform plan published by the Commissioners. Ringstead's contribution to the cost was £227 from the 'liquidation of a debt incurred before the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act'.

On 14th June 1836 there was an advertisement in *The Times* inviting builders to tender by 9 o'clock on the 28th June and be 'prepared to enter upon the work forthwith'.

Less than a year later, on May 6th 1837 there was an advertisement for a married couple as MASTER and MATRON of the workhouse. It was not a job to suit everyone.

> *They must be without children resident with them, from 35 to 45 years of age, of good health and unquestionable character. They will be required to reside constantly in the workhouse where they will be provided with rations and lodgings and have a salary of £60 per annum. The master must write a good hand and be conversant with accounts.*

By 1871, when another advertisement for Master and Matron was placed the age range had widened to 30 to 50 years but the salary was still £60 a year, £40 for the Master and £20 for the Matron. The Master also had to provide:

> *. . . security, with two sureties in the sum of £300, for the due performance of the duties of both offices.*

In general the Matron had responsibility for the female inmates, as well as children under seven of both sexes. Simon Fowler in his book, *Workhouse*, also records the speech of John Wyld, Master of Bishop Auckland Workhouse, which detailed the couple's duties and stated that the Matron should also:

> *. . . 'pay particular attention to the moral conduct and orderly behaviour of the female paupers and children; to see that they are clean and decent in their dress and persons and to train them up in such employments as will best fit them for service.'*

Fowler also adds that:

> *Practical housekeeping issues, such as ensuring that bed linen was changed monthly also fell into her domain.*

The Master always had overall charge but it was an extremely demanding, poorly paid, post for both Master and Matron and it is little wonder that Unions often had difficulty in appointing and then retaining them and that many fell beneath the standard expected.

On June 15th 1837 there was a further advertisement inviting tenders for clothes:

> *Viz: black felt hats at per doz; boys leather caps at per doz; men's coats, waistcoats and trousers of dark gray woollen cloth at per suit; mans and boys linen shirts at per doz; strong gray worsted stockings at per doz; cotton handkerchiefs at per doz; men's house shoes at per pair; men's strong shoes at per pair; coarse straw bonnets at per doz; brown stuff gowns and frocks at per garment; stays at per doz; flannel at per yard; coloured twilled cotton at per yard; linen shifts at per doz; blue checked linen for aprons at per yard; black worsted hose at per doz; coloured cotton handkerchiefs and shawls at per doz; women's and girls' shoes at per doz..*

On the 6th July, one month after Mr. And Mrs. Thompson had been voted as the best candidates for the new positions of Master and Matron, the Board of Guardians met to approve the clothes tender from Mr. Edward Hodson. Much was the same as in the advertisement but the males' suits (Men's £1. 3s. 0d; Youths' 15s. 0d; Boys' 14s. 0d) were of beavertreen rather than 'dark gray woollen cloth'. Beavertreen is to beavers what moleskin is to moles and is a fustian made of coarse twilled cotton and garments are still made from it in England today.

We can get some picture of what those first workhouse inmates would have looked like. The men dressed in, to the modern eye, rather lumpy heavy brown suits with heavy boots. The women in long gowns of coarse brown 'stuff' over flannel petticoats with checked aprons and sometimes straw bonnets.

It would have been a recognizable, humiliating uniform, coarse, often ill-fitting, and hot in summer. Nevertheless for those who had lived in poverty for some time, and who had no other access to clothing charities, it would often have been better than the clothes that they had had to take off when they had entered the institution. If and when they left the institution (which they could do at any time with short notice) they would have had to don once more their own washed clothes. Of course for those who suddenly had to enter the workhouse because of the death or ruin of a breadwinner, the change in clothing would have been harder to bear.

The regime of the workhouse was designed to be harsh and unpleasant. It was set up as a deterrent to reduce the cost to the ratepayers so that each person who entered the Union Workhouse was deemed to be a failure of the system. Edwin Chadwick, the architect of the new Union Workhouse system, had advocated that the inmates, on entering should be divided into seven groups based on sex and age, who should, at all times be kept separate. Often there were only four groups but the insane and the mentally ill would usually have shared the same dormitories as the rest of their age and sex.

The workhouse day would also have been strictly ordered with early rising (5 a.m. in the original rules) and bed times (8 p.m.). Those able to would also have put in ten hours work each day within the timetable of meals and prayers. Again this would not have been such a shock to the system as to people today in those times when daylight governed the working day for many. What they would have found hard would have been the compulsion. Many Ringstead men and women, who were used to running their own lives by home work, whether shoemaking or lacemaking would have found this lack of freedom intolerable.

In some workhouses the paupers never saw the outside world. Even the work, which would often have been similar to that in the prisons, but without the treadmill, would have been within the walls of the union. At Thrapston, however, there were, at times, work parties to local quarries where the men broke stones. It was miserable, rough work but many used to the open fields would have been glad to leave the claustrophobic conditions of the workhouse. As we shall see, the inmates also worked at producing firewood during some of the century. The women were expected to work in the kitchens and laundry as well as keeping the Workhouse clean.

At Andover in 1845 a scandal was uncovered when it was found that the inmates were so starved that they tried to eat the marrow from the rotting bones that they were breaking up. This caused a national scandal and many, such as Charles Dickens, were against the whole workhouse system. What it also showed is that as with many institutions, and as we are finding even now, it is the humanity and integrity of those running and managing a residential institution which largely determine how good or bad such places are.

There were never such horrific conditions as at Andover or the harsh dehumanised norm of the large urban Workhouses but there was at least one scandal at Thrapston. It was linked to a Master and Matron who had been in post for some sixteen years. The *Northampton Mercury* of the 16th July 1887 had an article headed, "Shocking Revelations". Underneath was a report of the Board of Guardians meeting on the previous Tuesday. The Workhouse Inspector, W. A. Peel, had reported that on his last visit he had found the House in a "discreditable condition". He had discovered:

> *On the male side of the House the beds were either unmade, or had been used since being made. Some of the bolsters in the dormitories were without straw. On the Master's attention being called to this he had stated that he had asked the guardians for straw but they had not let him have any. On being further questioned, however, he could not say which guardians he had asked. The earth closets were in an offensive state. The Inspector found also that the inmates and casuals were employed together in cutting wood, contrary to the regulations. The male and female reception areas were in a filthy state and littered with feathers. The infections ward was foul and in a disgraceful state. The washerwomen complained that their beer had been withheld. The mortuary was in a disgraceful state and in it was a dead body, not properly attended to. In the hospital a lad was lying on a bed without sheets. The nurse said that she had asked for these sheets but could not get any. The inmates said the soup and beef-tea that they were supplied with were not fit to drink but (and the Chairman said he wished to call especial attention to this) and told the Inspector they would suffer for it. [By withdrawing food.]*

The Guardians seemed even more concerned by the fact that the Master had sometimes been absent from the House without leave. They had also found over some four years that the maintenance costs were 2s. to 2. 6d. per head above the cost of other unions. There had been several inconclusive investigations to discover why this was the case but all they could say was that it could only be down to "bad management".

The Master and Matron were asked to resign which they did with a letter ending:

> *Trusting we may leave the House as clean and in good order as we found it 16 years ago.*

This, however, was not the end of the matter and "bad management" was perhaps a euphemism for fraud. On the 30th August 1887 Richard P. Wakefield was charged with embezzling ten sums of money of 19s 6d. amounting in all to £9 15s. We discover that Thrapston Workhouse like many others provided employment for the able-bodied male paupers by wood sawing and billet making.

These billets were used in the Workhouse as firewood but were also sold to local customers as far as Higham Ferrers. Some of the inmates took this wood out on a donkey cart and were paid by the customers. They gave this money to the Master.

Richard Wakefield was charged with keeping some of this money himself. The Magistrates made it clear that the Guardians had been very slip-shod in managing the accounts and, as a result, although "there was a cause of very grave suspicion against the defendant" nevertheless they did not feel there was clear proof of his wrongdoing. The case was dismissed and, perhaps surprisingly, Richard Wakefield stayed in Thrapston with his family and by 1891 had become the local Registrar of Marriages.

As you can imagine, food was a constant source of complaint among the inmates and none would have grown strong on the diet. It would have been very dull with a minimum of meat and a maximum of "filling" carbohydrate. On 5th April 1856 the Guardians' Minute Book records the "Dietaries for Children, which gives some indication of the uniform dullness of the fare and the exact way in which it was calculated,

Table A. Children from 2 to 5

	BREAKFAST		**DINNER**				**SUPPER**		
	Bread *oz*	**Milk** *Pints*	**Meat** *oz*	**Potatoes** *oz*	**Suet Pudding** *oz*	**Rice Pudding** oz	**Bread** *oz*	**Butter** *oz*	**Tea** *Pints*
Sunday	4	½	3	8	-	-	4	¼	1
Monday	4	½	-	-	8	-	4	¼	1
Tuesday	4	½	3	8	-	-	4	¼	1
Wednesday	4	½	-	-	-	8	4	¼	1
Thursday	4	½	3	8	-	-	4	¼	1
Friday	4	½	-	-	8	-	4	¼	1
Saturday	4	½	3	8	-	-	4	¼	1

Suet Pudding = 9½oz flour and 1½oz suet to pound. Rice Pudding = 5½oz Rice to a pound

In Table B for the children from 5 to 9 the fare was identical except they received an extra 2oz of suet and rice puddings and ¾ oz of cheese instead of the ¼oz of butter.

(Thrapston Board of Guardians Minute Books NRO PL10)

The numbers of paupers from Ringstead living in Thrapston Union Workhouse were never large and were mainly the old and infirm and unmarried women entering the workhouse to have a baby, as the table below shows.

Thrapston Union Workhouse Births 1839 – 1910 and Deaths 1837 – 1910
Registers of Births: Ringstead People only

Date of Birth	Sex	Name of Parent(s)	Legitimate or Illegitimate	When Baptized and Name (or death)
01 Mar 1839	F	Jane Weekley	Illegit	-
28 Apr 1843	M	Jane Weekley	Illegit	Died 29 Apr -
10 Mar 1846	M	Lydia Atly	Illegit	-
04 Feb 1848	F	Elizabeth Ann Smith	Illegit	-
02 Mar 1849	F	Mary Ann Warren	Illegit	-
14 Apr 1851	M	Elizabeth Major	Illegit	-
09 Sep 1852	M	Jane Weekley	Illegit	-
04 Mar 1861	F	Louisa Tomlin	Legit.	
02 Feb 1873	M	Hepzibah Major	Illegit	02 Mar 1873 Joseph
09 Jan 1887	M	Mary Ann Brown	Illegit	-
14 Aug 1896	M	Maud Emma Burgiss	Illegit	-
24 Mar 1899	F	Mundin(g)	-	Winifred
29 June 1905	F	Jane Elizabeth Nash	-	-
25 Aug 1906	F	Maud Carter	Illegit	-
07 Apr 1907	M	Jane Smith	Illegit	-

Register of Deaths: Ringstead People only

Date of Death	Name	Age	Where Buried
21 May 1839	Mary Saddington	77	-
29 Apr 1843	Thomas Weekly	Infant 1 day	-
23 Dec 1843	William Rawson	83	-
19 May 1851	Thomas Major	5 weeks	-
13 June 1857	Lot Magor (Major)	33	-
17 Sep 1859	Jane Fairy	41	-
02 Mar 1862	John Roberts	74	-
01 Apr 1863	Alice Roberts	55	-
03 Feb 1866	Morris Knowles	73	-
12 Dec 1868	William Roughton	22	-
14 Dec 1871	Anna Hardwick	83	-
10 Feb 1874	James Whiteman	71	-
05 Jun 1875	William Walker	76	-
30 Nov 1875	Sarah Andrews	67	-
24 Dec 1878	Hill Greene	65	-
19 Apr 1881	Timothy Chandler	69	-
16 Apr 1882	George Mundin	62	-
08 Feb 1884	Samuel Rowlett	75	-
19 Dec 1885	Rebecca Manning	73	-
19 Sep 1888	Sarah Abbott	63	Ringstead
18 Jun 1889	Rebecca Warren	81	Ringstead

14 Jun 1890	George Warren	77	Ringstead (fr)
14 May 1891	George Smith	46	Ringstead
04 Jun 1893	Elizabeth Wadsworth	70	Woodford (fr)
25 Jun 1896	Richard Wadsworth	60	Ringstead (fr)
09 Dec 1896	James Figgis	38	Ringstead
02 Apr 1899	William Munding	52	Ringstead (fr)
28 Dec 1899	Thomas Hilson	48	Ringstead
11 Feb 1901	William Allen	69	Ringstead
19 Nov 1902	Elizabeth Warren	86	Ringstead (?)
05 May 1903	William Phillips	73	Ringstead
24 Sep 1904	Henry Phillips	57	-
09 Apr 1907	William Smith	29	Ringstead
15 May 1908	Samuel York	66	Ringstead
11 Sep 1908	William Dick	74	Ringstead
06 Dec 1908	Eliza Fox	88	-
11 Jan 1909	William Manning	70	Ringstead
18 Mar 1910	Sarah Colbert	90	-

(fr) Friends or family have taken body to bury

Few of the people in these lists would have stayed long in the workhouse. Some would have gone in to give birth to a child and others to die. George Mundin, for example is shown as dying there on 14th May 1882 but we know from a report in the *Wellingborough News* that this was an even sadder case than most workhouse deaths.

> *SUICIDE OF AN ELDERLY MAN – Mr. J. T. Parker held an inquest at Thrapston Workhouse on Monday on the body of George Mundin, labourer, of Ringstead, aged 64 years. Deceased had of late suffered from bronchitis, and this had prevented him from going to work. On the 8th inst. He went to bed at 9.30 in his usual spirits and the next morning his daughter found him with his throat cut and a knife beside him. He was removed to Thrapston Workhouse, but he succumbed to his injuries on the 16th inst. The jury returned a verdict that the deceased committed suicide while temporarily insane.*

A report of the suicide in the *Northampton Mercury* included significant extra information:

> *The deceased had for some time been in a depressed state of mind, owing to family troubles and he had dreaded having to go into the Union.*

We see that many workhouses gradually became local hospitals, often with separate infirmaries being built to replace the old sick wards but most elderly people still dreaded going into them, because of their past associations, for much of the Twentieth Century.

If we look at the Censuses for Thrapston Workhouse from 1841 to 1891 we see a similar picture with comparatively few people from Ringstead and those almost entirely mothers and their children, or expectant single mothers or the infirm elderly.

Censuses for Thrapston Union Workhouse: Ringstead Born and Families

CENSUS	Name	Sex	Occupation	Age
1841				
	TOTAL INMATES 0		***Resident Staff 3***	***0***
1851	Harry Atly	M	-	4
	Elizabeth Major	F	Servant	19
	TOTAL INMATES 64		***Resident Staff 3***	
1861	Louisa Tomlin	F	Ag Lab's Wife	21
	Rebecca Tilley	F	-	5
	Isaac Tilley	M	-	5
Family	Mary Tilley	F	Ag Lab's Wife b. Stanwick	40
	Eliza Tilley	F	b. Stanwick	7
	Sarah E Tomlin	F	b. Thrapston	I mth
	TOTAL INMATES 65		***Resident Staff 3***	
1871	Clara Sutton	F	-	5
	Fanny Coggins	F	Wife of Shoemaker	24
	Louisa Tomlin	F	Wife of Ag Lab	33
	James Whiteman	M	Shoemaker	71
Family	Sarah Tomlin	F	Scholar b. Raunds	10
	Martha Tomlin	F	b. Sheffield, Yorks.	1
	Elizabeth Sutton	F	Dom. Servant b. Little Addington	41
	Elizabeth Coggins	F	b. Raunds	6
	Alice Coggins	F	b. Raunds	3
	Margaret Coggins		b. Raunds	2
	John Coggins		b. Raunds	2 mths
	TOTAL INMATES 67		***Resident Staff 4***	
1881	Timothy Chandler	M	Gardener	70
	Elizabeth Figgis	F	Pauper	18
	TOTAL INMATES 87		***Resident Staff 4***	
1891	NONE			
	TOTAL INMATES 75		***Resident Staff 4***	
1901	Mary Mundin	F	widow	40
	Harry Mundin	M		12
	Percy Mundin	M		10
	Alexander Mundin	M		5
	William Phillips	M	Ordinary agricultural labourer	71
	Henry Phillips	M	Horsekeeper on farm	52
	William Manning	M	Ordinary agricultural labourer	61
Family	Sarah Phillips	F	(wife of Henry : born Raunds)	55
	Bertram Burgin	M	Illegit. son of Maud b. Thrapston	5
	Maud Burgin	F	Illegit. daughter of Maud b. Raunds	3
			[Maud (mother) born in Ringstead]	
	TOTAL INMATES 102		***Resident Staff 4***	

In the 1841 Census there were no Ringstead born children in the Thrapston Workhouse; in 1851 there were just two; in 1861 three (although there were five other linked family members); four in 1871 (with five other family members); two in 1881, none in 1891 and 7 in 1901. Of course this is only a snapshot on one day every ten years and is based only on those born in Ringstead but it does indicate that numbers of people from Ringstead in the workhouse were low and it tended to be used by people in times of crisis rather than poverty, although all would have been poor. The resident staffing moves away from education to nursing, as the Workhouse increasingly becomes the local hospital for the poor, especially for childbirth, mental illness and 'senile decay'.

Workhouse buildings on a frosty morning 13th December 2012

(Now East Northamptonshire District Council Offices.)

The perimeter wall and gates have gone but otherwise looks very similar to George Clarke's 1847 sketch. Now, however, surrounded by a housing estate.

As I am writing this in the last week before Christmas 2012 I thought I ought to finish on a more positive note and show the other side of the Dickensian world. On 27th December 1900, in the last few weeks of Victorian England, there was an article in the *Northants Evening Telegraph, headed, CHRISTMAS DAY AT THE WORKHOUSE:*

> *As in former years, the Guardians of the Thrapston Union have this year done everything possible for those under their care. The large dining hall, thanks to the efforts of the master and matron (Mr. And Mrs. Cook) had been tastefully adorned with the orthodox Christmas decorations of holly and ivy, these forming a frame for the many pictures which adorned the walls. The chapel was also nicely decorated with evergreens, the service which was held being conducted by the Rev. A.C. Neely of Islip. The dinner was naturally the great event of the day and a capital fare was provided, consisting of roast beef, fowls and plum pudding, to*

which, needless to add, full justice was done. The company numbered about 170. In the evening an entertainment arranged by the officers of the House was given, several of the musical inmates contributed to the programme. With kindly forethought Mrs. Buckley of Thrapston had sent a number of toys for the children, whilst Dr. Masters (the former medical officer) gave each man an ounce of tobacco, and two ounces of tea and half-a-pound of sugar to the women, besides oranges and sweets for the children. The master also received a parcel of books and pictures from the office of the "Review of Books", for which he desires to express his thanks as well as to the other donors.

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Ringstead Gift Charity

The poor of Ringstead, as in many other parishes could look to a local charity for help before they were forced into looking to the Poor Law and the Workhouse. At the time of the Ringstead Enclosure (1839 – 41) Thomas Wilkins, considered the principal resident at the time, tried to discover the history of the Ringstead Charity Estate for George Capron who had bought up much of the land of the old Ringstead Open Fields.

He found that, in 1824, Thomas Burton, the non-resident Lord of the Manor, and Oliver Cox who was a resident land owner, had been the only remaining trustees and it was the latter who effectively managed the operation of the fund. At that time, John Porter, then an old man of 78, who had been the Parish Clerk for many years, confirmed that the origin of the charity was lost but at some point a bequest of strips of land among the Ringstead Open Fields had been made, the rent from which were to be given to the deserving poor, mainly in the form of clothing and bedding. Other aged inhabitants confirmed his account. A charity had begun in 1617 when John Wells left a bequest of sixteen shillings to be paid yearly and administered by the minister and churchwardens. They were to use it to help the sixteen poorest households in Ringstead. How and when it changed into the Ringstead Charity which was based on the rental money from land that the Charity owned is unclear.

The entries in the Charity's small cash book are difficult to decipher but include in November 1835:

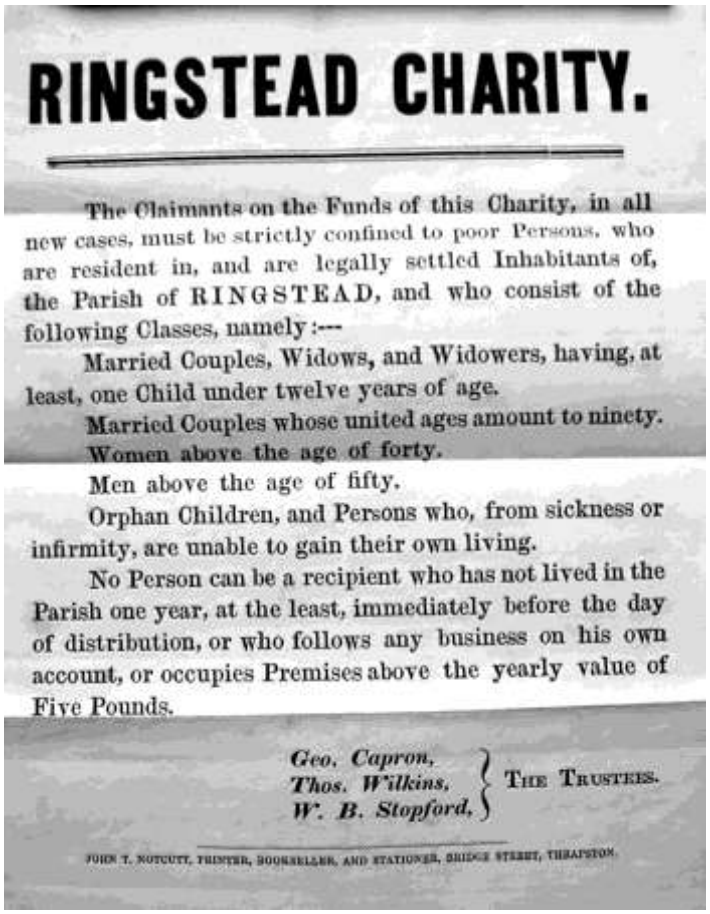
Widow Whiteman	*5 yds Flannel 1/=. 3 yds blanket 9/=*
Widow Major	*Ditto*
John Fairey & wife	*2 sheets @ 2/11 & 4 yds D[?] 11/=*
Daniel Ball	*1 Blanket 5/= & 2 sheets 5/10*

In 1836 Oliver Cox died and Thomas Wilkins took over as the other trustee. Then, with the enclosure of the Open Fields George Capron became the major landowner and he, with Thomas Wilkins, took over the running of the charity. It was probably also be at this time that the strips were consolidated into twenty-seven acres of land on the Denford Road. The granting of aid seems to have been run previously according to the judgement of the trustees but Capron wanted the charity to have clear rules. In 1847 these rules were agreed and a handbill was produced and distributed throughout the parish.

This listed the 'legally settled inhabitants' who were entitled to claim. These included:

> *Married Couples, Widows, and Widowers, having at least, one Child under twelve years of age.*
> *Married Couples whose united ages amount to ninety.*
> *Women above the age of forty.*
> *Men above the age of fifty.*
> *Orphan Children and Persons who, from sickness or infirmity, are unable to gain their own living*

They also had to have lived in Ringstead for at least a year, not follow any business on their own account or occupy premises above the yearly value of £5. Of course, they also had to be judged to be in need.



RINGSTEAD CHARITY.

The Claimants on the Funds of this Charity, in all new cases, must be strictly confined to poor Persons, who are resident in, and are legally settled Inhabitants of, the Parish of RINGSTEAD, and who consist of the following Classes, namely:—

Married Couples, Widows, and Widowers, having, at least, one Child under twelve years of age.

Married Couples whose united ages amount to ninety.

Women above the age of forty.

Men above the age of fifty.

Orphan Children, and Persons who, from sickness or infirmity, are unable to gain their own living.

No Person can be a recipient who has not lived in the Parish one year, at the least, immediately before the day of distribution, or who follows any business on his own account, or occupies Premises above the yearly value of Five Pounds.

Geo. Capron,
Thos. Wilkins,
W. B. Stopford, } THE TRUSTEES.

JOHN T. NOTCUTT, PRINTER, BOOKSELLER, AND STATIONER, BRIDGE STREET, THRAPSTON.

Ringstead Charity Handbill

(With the kind permission of Christopher Capron)

In 1863, the newly appointed vicar, Percival Sandilands, was asked to become a trustee but would only accept if part of the funds were applied to the maintenance of the school. The Reverend Sandilands was successfully driving through a scheme to establish a school in the village at this time. He was asked by the trustees to submit a scheme to the Charity Commissioners. This he duly did and in 1864 the Ringstead Gift Charity was registered and three quarters of the income from the rents was to be applied:

> *. . . towards the benefit and support of a school or schools for the instruction and education of the children of labourers and those persons of the poorer class residing in the said Parish of Ringstead including the industrial education of the female children or of any limited number of such children to be selected by the trustees, so long as such school or schools shall be efficiently and properly conducted and there shall not be any rule or practice in the management thereof which shall exclude any children from admission thereto upon the sole ground of their particular religion, creed and persuasion.*

This only left a quarter of the rents for the poorest of the parish or, to be more exact, 'the deserving and necessitous'. The Gift Charity was to provide them with 'clothes, bedding and fuel, medical or other aid in sickness, or other articles in kind'.

We see a year later that the allotment holders were being instructed to gather stones from their plots and to place them in a heap near the road. They would be paid a maximum of 8d. a load and the stones would be used to improve the allotments' cart road. On December 26th 1868 the Minutes clearly reiterate that the allotments are:

> *. . . intended to help the deserving poor; that if a man is in a position to open a shop he no longer requires the aid of an allotment; and that in the case of any holder of an allotment so embarking be made he shall, if the Trustees think fit, be called upon to quit his allotment.*

In December 1870 it is resolved that no man will be eligible for an allotment until he has lived in the parish for a year. It seems likely that some of these rules were created to exclude certain individual claimants. We see a constant list of people who are told to give up their allotments either because of non-payment of rent or because their circumstances had changed and they were not now considered deserving enough. The allotments became known as 'Mr. Capron's Gardens' and an 1898 Agreement between the Rev. G. Capron and John Pearson for Garden No. 9 clearly sets out the rules of occupation which include the condition:

> *That he will cultivate the Garden well and keep it free from weeds and that he will not in any year sow more than 20 poles with potatoes, nor more than half the Garden with white straw corn, and will sow the remainder with root crops, vegetables or beans.*

The charge for the allotments is set as 2s 2d. per rood per quarter on 1st January 1897 and by the time of John Pearson's agreement, in October 1898 it is set as £2 10s. 0d per acre per year. At the start of the nineteenth century measurements could be slippery concepts with many local variations but we can assume, by this time that four roods were equal to one acre and the rental had increased by over forty percent. This seems excessive so there may have been other factors.

By the 1890s the aid distributed was mainly given in the form of money instead of clothes and bedding with, in 1895, a single person receiving six shillings and a couple nine shillings. The allotments and the small weekly sums would perhaps have helped the very poor survive outside the workhouse, especially if they had a family to help them.

The Ringstead Charity would have helped generations of poor Ringstead people. If we look at the cash book for 1879/80 we see a typical list of payments:

Widow Abbott	6s.
James Attlay	6s.
William Bates	6s.
Thomas Ball	6s.
Widow Bull	6s.
Widow Burnham	6s.
Widow Cottingham	6s.
Widow Dix	6s.
Henry Dix	6s.
Widow Fox	6s.
Noah Green & Wife	9s.

Noah Green and his wife had been the Post Master and Mistress so we see that once their working lives were finished many elderly people, not just the poorest, became dependant on charity.

Even as late as 1968 the trustees of the charity were being reprimanded by the Charity Commissioners for spending too much of the income on the poor rather than using three quarters for educational purposes. This educational part of the charity became a separate charity called Ringstead Educational Foundation.

Like the Poor Law, the Gift Charity was very Victorian in its fear of giving to the undeserving. Increasingly the income designated for those in need was used for the relief of the poor elderly, before the national old age pensions came into being early in the next century. Nevertheless many would have been grateful to the small handouts which would have made their lives a little easier even if it was not always enough to save them from the Workhouse.

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Henry Atley (1846 -1896)

In the life story of William Weekley Ball we told of the disappearance and probable death, by his hand, of his heavily pregnant mistress, Lydia Atley [sometimes Atly or Attley] on a warm July evening in 1850.

We can see in the Parish Registers that she had a child, called Sarah Ann Atley, probably named after her sister, who was born in 1848, baptised in the parish church on 9th June 1849 and buried in the churchyard, aged six months, just ten days later. Sarah Ann Dix, her sister, gave evidence at the trial of Lydia's alleged murderer in 1864 where she states:

> *I cannot say if Lydia Attley kept company with Wilkinson before the birth of her first child.*

We learn that James Wilkinson, a journeyman baker, was alleged to be the father of Lydia's first child. I had thought that this was taking the child whom she was carrying at the time of her disappearance as her second child. What I had not found out at the time of writing that biography was that Lydia had had a child in the Thrapston Union Workhouse some two years earlier. For all its harsh regime it was often the best place for a poor woman, especially a single one, to have a child as there was at least basic food and medical care.

Henry was born in the Thrapston Workhouse on 10th March 1846, the illegitimate son of Lydia and, possibly, James Wilkinson. We do not hear of Henry in the accounts of Lydia's last day at William Ball's trial so perhaps he remained in the workhouse. Certainly he is there in 1851 aged four years old. He is shown in the Census list next to the nineteen-year-old Elizabeth Major also from Ringstead. The Census was conducted on 30th March and Elizabeth gave birth to her illegitimate son Thomas on 14th April who died just 5 weeks later. Was Elizabeth able to give some comfort to Henry?

By 1861 he is working as a 'milk boy' for Thomas Freeman, a Ringstead farmer of 350 acres employing 12 men and 2 boys. Henry is living with Thomas and his wife Lucy and a 'maid-of-all-work' Elizabeth Bluff, so perhaps they had taken him under their wing. In her evidence at the trial Sarah Ann Dix had told of Lydia's last day when she had sent her to take dinner to her husband who had been working in 'Mr Freeman's field'. Perhaps the Freemans, who had been wealthy yeoman farmers in the parish for many years, felt an obligation to help this orphaned boy.

When we next find Henry, in the 1871 Census there is one of those unexpected and yet far from uncommon moves into a totally different environment. He is a twenty-five year old mechanic boarding with George Smith, a miner and his wife Jane at 20 Church Street, Wednesbury in Staffordshire. Henry was to make the West Midlands his home. Could it be, with the trial of William Weekley Ball in 1864 that it was thought that he would be better away from Ringstead, in a place where he could leave his past behind?

In 1872 Henry married Emma Partridge, the daughter of James Partridge, a screw forger who lived in nearby Darlaston. The couple had a daughter, Harriet Emma, born on the 16th June 1874 at their home in 90 Old Park Road, Wednesbury. Sadly, Emma died in childbirth and, understandably, it was another six months until the child's birth was registered. At the time of the registration, on 14th December 1874, Henry was a 'Stock taker in an Iron Works'.

In the 1881 Census he is a thirty-five year old widower, once again boarding, but this time with Elder Cooper, a moulder, and his family at 30 Hill Street, Wednesbury. His daughter, Harriet is staying with her grandparents, James and Ann Partridge and their grown-up children at 107 Cobden Street, Wednesbury.

Henry was now a 'Time Keeper'. It would seem likely that he was working in one of the local factories checking that workers arrived and left on time. He had moved from being a worker to being someone who worked for the company checking on workers. Depending on the personal qualities of the person employed it could be an unpopular job as lateness could be punished with large deductions from wages.

In 1886 Henry married again, this time to Mary West and by 1891 the couple have three children, Nellie, Edith E and Dorothy. That Henry was moving into management can be seen from the 1991 Census for he is now the 'Manager of a Nut and Bolt Works'. The family are living at 1 Bills Street in Darlaston.

This was an area with houses and small workshops cheek by jowl. Many of these were gradually taken over and the work moved into large purpose-built factories in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We can see in the streets around them, a boiler tender and a file cutter, a breaker down (sheet mills) and an iron straightener, a blacksmith and a blacksmith's blower. There are also a number directly involved with the nuts and bolt industry: bolt screwers, forgers and machinists, an orders clerk and stock taker.

In 1892 he is probably the, "H. Atler, Bills Street, Darlaston, Clerk", who is given in the local newspaper as one of the signatories in the Memorandum of Association to change *James Simpson & Sons* from a partnership to a limited company. The company were iron founders and manufactured iron and steel, bolts, nuts and tools. The firm was based at the Acorn Works, Bills Street, Darlaston so Henry was very close to his work. With mostly coal-fired, steam driven machinery it would have been a noisy, smoky environment in the factory and also in the area around.

It is quite a remarkable journey that Henry has made from being the 'bastard child' of a poor murdered woman in Northamptonshire to the manager of a works in the West Midlands. Unfortunately Henry died some five years later in 1896 aged just fifty years old. His widow, Mary, lived another thirty-two years.

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Louisa Cobley [also Tomlin, Norris and Elliott] (1839 - 1913)

Louisa was one of the few young women that entered Thrapston Workhouse to have a child who were already married. She was the daughter of William and Elizabeth Cobley and was baptised in Ringstead Parish Church on the 10th February 1839. She was a twin but her brother, David, died just three weeks later. Her father was a carman and, in the 1841 Ringstead Census, we see Louisa, aged two, with her older brother Samuel and her parents. A carman was someone who drove a horse-drawn cart of some kind. It may be that he was taking coal around the village.

Living next door was Lydia Atlee (Attley), a widow, with her teenaged daughter whose disappearance was to cause such concern some nine years later. Lydia, the mother was a pauper, as was her neighbour Rose Manning. We cannot be sure but it seems likely that they were all living in London End, the small group of poor cottages where Back Lane joined the Denford Road. Certainly, Lydia was living there at the time of her disappearance in 1850.

William and Elizabeth had seven children between 1831 and 1849 but three died in the first two years of life. William died too in early October 1848 aged just forty-four years old leaving Elizabeth with four surviving children. The death of the main breadwinner would often have led to the workhouse for a poor widow and her family but Elizabeth, in an action which her daughter seems to have noted, married quickly, on 17th June 1850, and perhaps was financially better off than before as a result. Her new husband was Lovell Warren, a coal dealer, some sixteen years her junior. One can

only wonder if he was the employer of William as a carman. These quick remarriages will only seem cynical to those who have not endured grinding poverty.

The 1851 Census has Elizabeth with Lovell, together with Louisa aged 12 together with her siblings, Samuel, Joseph and Martha. Louisa married John Tomlin, a young brickmaker from Raunds on 13th February 1859. The Marriage Certificate gives Louisa's father as William Cobley but gives his occupation as coal merchant which may refer to her stepfather Lovell Warren. Neither bride nor groom were able or willing to sign their names. The honeymoon period was short because by the 1861 Census she was an inmate in Thrapston Union Workhouse. With her is her daughter Sarah E Tomlin who was born in the workhouse a month earlier on 4th March 1861.

Where is her husband John in 1861? From other evidence it seems that the couple spent some time in Derbyshire and Yorkshire. Could he be the S, T or J Tomlin in Sheffield Union Workhouse? This man is a stone mason who is said to come from Ireland. Perhaps he did not want to be sent back to his home parish. It is possible but it is unlikely. Sarah Elizabeth was baptised in Raunds Parish Church on June 30th, just a few months after her birth. John is shown as a labourer.

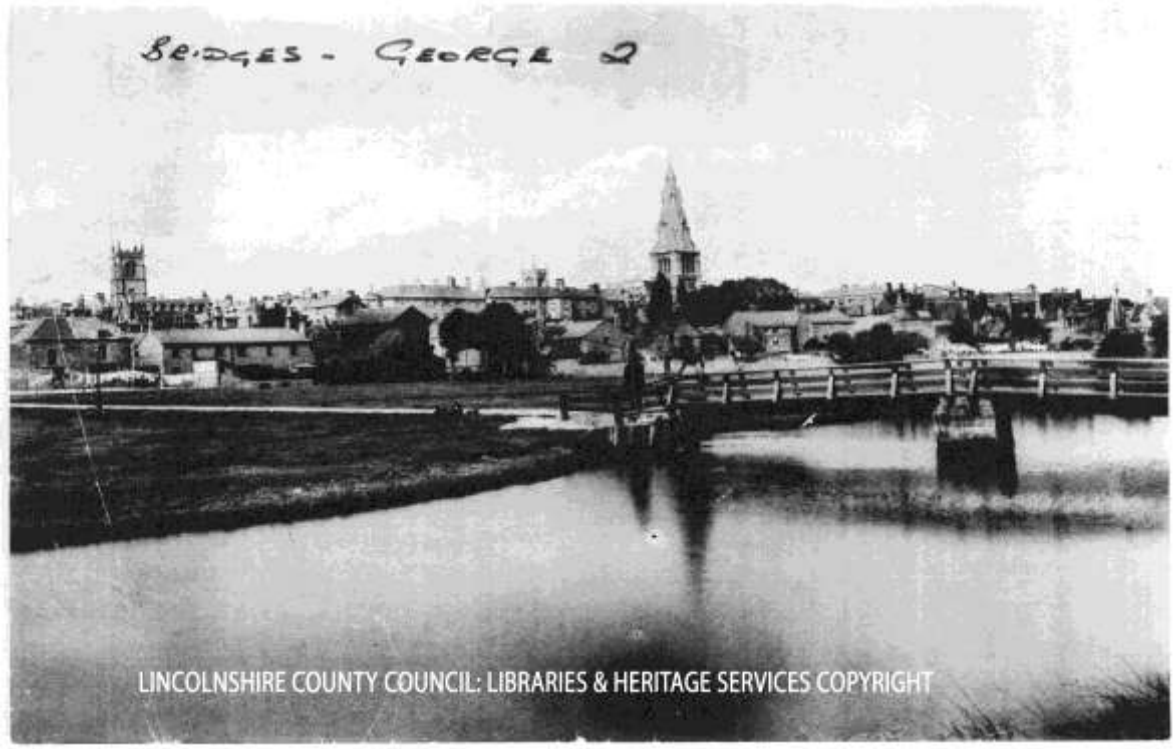
The truth about the often 'lost' years between Censuses can be filled in because of a shocking sequence of events which brought Louisa to court. It is from this case that we discover that John Tomlin deserted Louisa in September 1863 at about the time of the birth of their son, Alfred. This forced her back into the Workhouse where she remained for some years. On 22nd November 1866 a shoemaker from Raunds called Edwin Goldsborough (or Goldsboro) came into the Workhouse. At 9 am on 25th February 1867 Edwin Goldsborough left the Workhouse and two hours later Louisa with the two children left, too, with another woman called Elston and her child. The Workhouse Master, Robert Bray, delayed letting out Louisa because he had heard of her intentions of going with Goldsborough and of leaving the children somewhere.

Two days later Sarah, who would be nearly seven years old, was brought back to the Workhouse by Louisa's brother's wife but whether she was abandoned, ran away or was left with the brother's family we do not know. Edwin and Louisa, with four-year-old Alfred continued walking north to Deeping St James in Lincolnshire where they stayed for a couple of weeks. Edwin managed to get work as a shoemaker with a Mr. Fowler in Market Deeping, which was about two miles away. Louisa sometimes went, with her young son, to the 'shop' to help him. After some ten days Edwin left and Fowler, the employer, advised her to beg her way back to Thrapston rather than stay with such an idle man.

Goldsborough made it clear on many occasions that he was not prepared to work for another man's child and told her if she did not get rid of Alfred he would leave her. On 14th March Louisa went to the Bourne Union Workhouse, some nine miles further north, and asked them to take Alfred in. She told them that Alfred was the son of her sister, Mary Winterton and had been born in Bourne Workhouse. The Relieving Officer could not find the birth but said that he would take them both in but not the child on his own. All Unions were worried about being left with the expense of looking after deserted children. She also went before the Board of Guardians but they again refused unless she too entered the Workhouse. She hurried out of the room saying, "I shall do something different to that".

They left Deeping St James and walked the further nine miles west to Stamford. Edwin stayed in a lodging house while, carrying Alfred, Louisa walked around the town. It was a cold moonlit evening with snow on the ground. She was seen at times around the town wearily trudging along with Alfred a heavy burden in her arms. She was passed, by a witness, on her own at the George Bridge and she made no mention of a missing child. At 9.40 pm the couple reported the loss at the police station.

Louisa told the police that she had been very tired and had sat down on the footbridge and put Alfred down beside her. He had “slipped through the rails and got drowned”.



The George Bridge around 1870/1880 showing the bars under which Alfred rolled to his death.
The cross bars were later replaced by large diamond lattice work

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We find all this information from the several court cases that followed over the next months when the couple had to answer to a charge of wilful murder. From the start the police were suspicious and took them immediately into custody. Edwin immediately became violent and it took four police officers to drag him to his cell. At the various Petty Sessions they were both remanded until the Summer Assizes in Lincoln Castle in July 1867.

Alfred’s body was not found until 5th May about 200 yards downstream from the George Bridge and the cause of death was established as drowning. He was found still in the hood, dress and shoes that he had left the Thrapston Workhouse dressed in, the body protected by the thick mud. Edwin’s lawyer submitted that his client had no case to answer and he was discharged. He also claimed that the “uniform kind treatment of her child by the prisoner negative the theory of the prosecution that she had thrown her child into the river on purpose”. The jury was out for forty minutes and returned a not guilty verdict on Louisa.

At first it seemed likely that the couple moved north to the Sheffield area for Louisa had a child there in about 1870 and then returned south to Thrapston Workhouse where we find her back with her ten-year-old daughter Sarah (who may never have left the Workhouse) and her new child, Martha who is one years old. There is no sign of Edwin Goldsborough in the Workhouse with her. Here the picture becomes confused for further research reveals that he was in the Thrapston Workhouse on 12th January 1868 because he was sent to prison for six weeks for assaulting three other inmates after a dispute over his interference with the fire in the room. In February 1871 he was once again

sent to prison for a month for, 'misconduct in the Union Workhouse'. This is the reason he is not in the Workhouse in the 1871 Census. His behaviour always volatile seems to have worsened for the Northampton Mercury of the 8th April 1871 reports:

> *One male convict has been removed to Pentonville prison. Edwin Goldsborough was brought into prison on 10th February for misconduct in the Thrapston Union Workhouse, was certified as being insane by two medical gentlemen on the following day, and removed on 16th February to the Northampton Lunatic Asylum by an order from the Secretary of State.*

There we will leave him.

On April 2nd 1871, while Louisa was in Thrapston Workhouse, and Edwin Goldsborough was probably in Northampton Lunatic Asylum, her husband may be the John Tomlin who is a labourer born in Northamptonshire, lodging in Ilkeston in Derbyshire. It seems unlikely that he was the father of any her children after Alfred and it is also not clear, as he was in Thrapston Workhouse in 1868 and 1871, if Edwin Goldsborough was the father either, although it is possible. In the 1871 Census Louisa is shown as a widow. Of course few working class people could afford to divorce in the nineteenth century and this may not be true. We have not yet found the death of John Tomlin but there may be a number of other reasons for this.

By the 1881 Census Louisa is shown as thirty-seven years old, although actually a few years older, and is living in Marshalls Lane in Raunds. With her is her ten year old daughter, Martha, (who we would expect to be at least eleven). There is also a boarder called Caleb Norris, a shoemaker born in Irchester. He is thirty-eight years old which may explain the reduction in Louisa's age. In the Raunds High Street is a man called George Elliott living with his wife Hannah and their family. We will meet him again a little later.

A few months after the Census Louisa married Caleb Norris. She must have felt, for once, secure from the workhouse but Caleb, died just two years later, only forty years old, in August 1883. Life would once again have been very difficult and in 1891she is a charwoman lodging with a sixty-six year old bachelor called Thomas Nobles in Hargrave Road, Raunds. Also in the house is a young visitor called Nellie Elliott who is just eleven years old.

George Elliott's wife, Hannah had died on 27th December 1886 in Northampton Infirmary which would explain in part why Nellie was staying with Louisa at the time of the 1891 Census. A few months later, in July-Sept 1891 Louisa married Nellie's father, George Elliott who was just two years her junior. They are together with George's daughter, Ellen Elizabeth, who is twenty-one years old and probably the Nellie of the last Census. They are living in Scalley Lodge in Marshalls Road, Raunds and George is a horsekeeper on a farm. A year later, in April-June 1902 George died aged 60.

By 1911 Louisa Elliott is a seventy-one year old widow living on her own in Baker Street Irthlingborough. It seems almost certain that she is the Louisa Elliott from Irthlingborough who died in the Wellingborough Workhouse Infirmary on 5th January 1913 The name of her deceased husband is unknown and her age is given as eighty-four, ten years older than her real age. Her cause of death was entered as senile decay which could explain this mistake. She may have been unable to give her correct age.

In the end she could not escape the workhouse. How we look on her life depends on our view as to her guilt over the death of her son and her various, "marriages". Was she a vulnerable woman who had the misfortune to attract men who treated her badly or was she an evil, scheming liar who would do anything to get by? As usual, the truth may be somewhere in the middle.

And what of Louisa's children? How did their troubled lives affect them? In 1911, while probably suffering from 'senile decay', Louisa said that she had had seven children of which three were still living. If this is true who is the third (or possibly fourth) child? Sarah Elizabeth married John Ablett, a shoe finisher from Irthlingborough in 1879 and is there in the 1881 Census. Then she disappears and in the 1891 Census John, now 32, is shown married to Rhoda who is 24 and born in Kettering. Rhoda is possibly Rhoda Olney (or Onley), a shoe liner, who in 1871 and 1881 is seen living with her grandparents in Gold Street, Wellingborough. I find no further sign of Sarah after 1881 nor of Rhoda after 1891. I cannot find the death of Sarah or her re-marriage or the death of Rhoda. John possibly re-married to Dinah Ekins in 1905. It seems likely that John and Sarah parted and found new partners outside marriage. There is more to be discovered but there we must leave her. Martha's life is even more hidden and I have not yet found her after the 1891 Census where she is with her mother in Raunds.

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Jane Weekley (1816 – 1877)

In the life of Louisa Cobley we saw how marriage and motherhood had put her in the Workhouse but also how she married twice more and so almost managed to live the rest of her life without the stigma of pauperism. Jane Weekley's life followed an opposite and harsher, path.

She was baptised on October 27th 1816 to Elizabeth, the wife of labourer James Weekley. At the time, of her birth the young couple, who had married in Ringstead Parish Church on 11th December 1815, were living in Hargrave, some four miles to the south-east. They soon after moved back to Ringstead and had the usual list of regular births, and infant deaths, over the next two decades. The exact number of children is complicated by the probability that at least one of the 'children' in the Census was actually an illegitimate grandchild, adopted as their own: a not uncommon practice.

In the 1841 Census James and Elizabeth and their surviving children are back in Ringstead. The children are listed in chronological order except for the last two daughters. Mary, aged one, is above Eliza who is two years old. This could just be a mistake by the enumerator but, when we look at the list of births in Thrapston Union Workhouse we see a different possibility. On 1st March 1839 an illegitimate female child had been born to Jane Weekley who 'belongs' to the parish of Ringstead.

This first universal, detailed census does not give the relationships to the 'Head of the House' as subsequent ones do but the 1851 Census does show twelve-year-old Eliza Weekley as the daughter of James. She was born in Thrapston, however, and it seems certain that Eliza was actually the illegitimate daughter of Jane who has been adopted by her parents. Of course there is the possibility that James is still the father but we have no evidence to support this apart from the Census entry.

Jane had two further illegitimate children born in Thrapston Workhouse. The second was a boy who was born on 28th April 1843 but who died the next day. A youthful Richard Jefferies, in 1874, wrote of the 'Field-Faring Women':

The overcrowding in cottages leads to what may be called an indifference to decency. It is not that in families decency is wantonly and of a set purpose disregarded, but stern necessity leads to a coarseness and indelicacy which hardens the mind and deadens the natural modesty even of the best girls. Then the low scandals of the village talked over from cottage to cottage, the rude jokes of the hayfield, the general looseness and indifference which prevail as to morality all prepare the girl for the too common fall. If she remains at home and works in the fields after the age of fifteen, unless uncommonly strong minded, it is an open question whether she will or will not succumb.

By 1851 James, still a shepherd, and his family had moved to Titty Ho in Raunds. His wife Elizabeth and daughters Jane, now thirty-four, Sophia and Eliza (Jane's daughter) are all shown as stone gatherers.

Clearing the fields of stones was often miserable, hard work. It seems that Jane endured field work most of her life and she would have been weather-beaten and old before her time. Richard Jefferies again, although writing of Wiltshire, gives some idea of the working life of a field-working woman:

At seven or eight years old the girl's labour begins. Before that she has been set to mind the baby or watch the pot, and to scour about the hedges for sticks for the fire. Now she has not only to mind the baby, but to nurse it; she carries it with her in her arms; and really the infant looks almost as large as herself and its weight compels her to lean backwards. She is left at home all day in charge of the baby, the younger children and the cottage. Perhaps a little bread is left for them to eat, but they get nothing more until the mother returns about half-past four, when woe be to the girl if the fire is not lit, and the kettle on. . . A little older – at ten or eleven or twelve – still more skinny and bony now as a rule, she follows her mother to the fields and learns to pick up stones from the young mowing grass, and place them in heaps to be carted away to mend drinking places for cattle. She learns to beat clots and spread them with a small prong; she works in the hayfield and gleans at corn-harvest. Gleaning –poetical gleaning – is the most unpleasant and uncomfortable of labour, tedious, slow, back-aching work; picking up ear by ear the dropped wheat, searching among the prickly stubble. . .

Growing plainer and plainer as years go by, the elder women are wrinkled and worn-looking, and have contracted a perpetual stoop.

Some eighteen months after the 1851 Census, on the 9th September, 1852 another son was born to Jane in Thrapston Workhouse. I have found no further sign of this child's life or his death. Was he adopted at birth? He is not recorded with Jane in the 1861 Census. She is still unmarried and living with her elderly parents. James is now seventy-two and Elizabeth some seven years younger. James is still a shepherd and Jane is a field worker, as are her younger sisters Mary Ann (21) and Sophia Cobley who, at twenty-nine is a young widow with a daughter, Charlotte. It seems that times were still hard for the family.

In his book, *The Common People,* J.F.C. Harrison reminds us that:

Women were an essential part of the harvest team. But their work was not limited to the special effort required at that time of year. Of the 2 million people employed full-time in agricultural occupations in 1851, 11.4 per cent were women and in 1901 the percentage was 5.9. Women worked in the fields at gleaning, potato gathering ("tatering"), turnip-pulling, hoeing, weeding, thinning, hop-binding and in all kinds of fruit and vegetable picking. In some jobs the children worked alongside their mothers.

I have not analysed the Censuses and, because the work was often seasonal, some women field workers would not be shown there but the impression one gets is that the percentages of recorded field workers in Raunds and Ringstead was less than the ones given above. In general shoe work or lacemaking would be preferred by most women able to make the choice.

In 1862 Jane's younger sister Sophia had an illegitimate son, Owen, with Joseph Smith named as the father. In 1863, 1867 and 1868 Sophia went to court to obtain weekly payments from Joseph who had paid 1s 6d for the first fifteen weeks after his son's birth. Unfortunately Joseph Smith was also 'indigent' and so served a one month prison sentence in default.

Eliza Weekley, daughter of Jane

With the kind permission of the Sylvia P. Weatherhogg (nee Cobley)

In 1864 James Weekley died and five years later, Elizabeth followed him to the grave. Jane would now have been on her own but in the summer of 1863 her sister Mary Ann had married William Webb Braybrook and in 1871 Jane was living with them. They are living in Chapel Road, Ringstead. By now, aged fifty-five, Jane is on Parish Relief Her hard life was almost certainly taking its toll. Six years later Jane died and was buried in the Raunds churchyard on 11th June 1877. No sign of her grave remains.

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Elizabeth Figgis (1864 – 1918) and her siblings

Samuel Figgis had been born in Bassingbourn in Cambridgeshire in 1820. Some time after 1841 he arrived in Ringstead and by 1851 was a carpenter's apprentice lodging with George Smith. We do not know what drew him north but in 1852 he married local girl Maria Hill.

Maria was the daughter of James Hill, the landlord of the *Black Horse* and the Hills were related by marriage to the Greens who were the other major landlords in the village. It would have meant that Samuel would have quickly become part of the Ringstead social web. We have seen in the life story of Korah Dicks that Samuel had been appointed to the old parish post of constable which continued alongside the new professional constabulary. Unfortunately, in 1855, he allowed the rascally Korah to get drunk in Northampton on his way to the County Gaol for which he was taken to court and fined.

Samuel and Maria's eldest son, Henry, was born in 1853 and there then followed seven more children until, in 1864, Elizabeth was the last. None of them were baptised in the Parish Church which probably means that they were nonconformists. Some time before 1869 Samuel became the landlord of the recently built *New Inn*, although he still kept on his carpentry work. The *Northampton Mercury* for the 17th February 1871 reports that he had been sued by a Mr Briggs, a farmer and brickmaker from Denford for £24 17s. 10d. (about £1200 today) for bricks. He had paid off some of the debt and the case seems to have been amicably settled.

We find in 1871 Samuel and Maria with six of their children living in the *New Inn* with one lodger, Timothy Chandler. Life seems seemed set fair with the two businesses and the children soon beginning to contribute or leave home. In 1873, however, Samuel died, aged 62, and was buried in the local churchyard on May 1st. Three-and -a -half years later, on December 13th 1876, Maria was buried. Henry, the eldest son had returned to the village and taken over the running of the New Inn but the family exploded and we pick out the individual children as they try to reconstruct their lives. Some seem to have managed quite well but three had contact with the workhouse although in very different circumstances.

If we start with Henry, the eldest, who had become the new landlord at the *New Inn*, it seemed at first that he would find it easiest to make a new life after the death of his parents. He had left Ringstead to become a journeyman baker in Lady's Lane, Northampton before returning to take over the pub. He had married Elizabeth Clarke from Brigstock in 1875 and in the 1881 Census we find the couple in the *New Inn* with their three children. Henry has simply described his occupation at 'Inn Keeper' but Elizabeth has had herself listed as a, 'Licensed Victualler's wife'. There seems a certain pride in their new life. They are listed in an 1885 Directory as still being in the *New Inn* but we know that the family left soon after.

For some reason it did not work out and Henry had to work for a time as a farm labourer at Ecton. The family are there when Eliza, his wife, died on 22nd September 1888. The cause of death was Phthisis which was a medical term for a wasting disease but usually referred to T.B., one of the great scourges of Victorian England. She had been ill for fifteen months and was just thirty-six years old when she died. The family's fortunes were rapidly falling apart.

In 1891 Henry was back in Northampton as a journeyman baker, boarding with his new employer, Edward Kightly at 51 Scarletwell Street. Writing earlier, in 1869, Richard Rowe described this part of town:

> *. . . which is almost solely peopled by shoemakers and their purveyors. Neatly built, yet squalid, unfragrant, two-floored cottages; roadways splashed with slops and littered with garbage; dirty children quarrelling, grubbing in the dirt, racing, squealing, squatting on the kerbstone in rows; vixenish women and beery men, in and outside of the low "publics", are the salient features of this area.*

His eldest son, George is an 'aerated water van boy' boarding just down the road from his widowed father. But where are his other children? We find Rose, Samuel, Margaret, John and Leonard all in Northampton Union Workhouse. It seems that poverty has ripped his children away from Henry but the truth is sadder. The children had been taken away to the Workhouse to protect them from their father. It was his nine-year-old daughter, Rose, who was the butt of his violence. He had accused her of selling bones and keeping the money and had told her to go upstairs. The *Northampton Mercury* for the 25th July 1890 continued:

> *Rose said that when he came up she ran under the bed and he told her to come out. She had no bruises before that beating. He had beaten her before but not many times.*

The family were living at 9 Little Cross Street and Eliza Quick, the wife of a lamp-lighter from Number 2 had seen her with a bleeding shoulder which Henry claimed in court had come from her hiding under the iron bedstead. Other of his children testified against him and 'Sammy' told how he had chopped the stick up' after his father had gone out. The Police Sergeant who went to the house found the children 'insufficiently clothed and very dirty'. He added:

> *The house was also in a very dirty condition. In both bedrooms you could not put a pin anywhere for fleas, and the stench was dreadful.*

Henry was sentenced to one month's hard labour. We now see that his employer had taken him in as a lodger after his release. Some six months later, on 19th December 1891 he died in Northampton Union Workhouse of Phthisis, like his wife. He was thirty-nine years old. By 1901 Rose and her sister Margaret had become maids in Eastbourne. We can only hope that they had happy lives.

Fanny Figgis, Henry's sister, had married Thomas Mitchell Chambers in 1873. He was a soldier who in 1871 had been a private in the 99th Foot in East Cowes Barracks. When we next find Fanny she is living in Leeds with six of her children. We discover what has happened in the meantime as five of the children have been born in various parts of India and only the youngest has been born in Leeds. Thomas returned to civilian life and by 1901 is a boiler stoker in a tannery and two of his girls are 'leather blackers'.

Thomas Figgis, in 1881, was a general labourer, lodging in Butchers Buildings in Irchester. By 1891 he has moved to West Ham with his wife Zillah (sometimes Lillah). The family then moved back to Wellingborough and in 1911 we still find Zillah in Melton Road but there is no sign of Thomas. In fact Thomas was probably paving the way for their emigration for he and Zillah emigrated to Summerland in British Columbia and certainly Zillah, in 1929 moved on to Ohio in the United States.

Harriett Ann is something of a mystery and I have found neither her death nor other appearance in the records. Her younger brother James, however, seems to have reacted badly to the death of his parents and shows up in the local newspapers. In July 1879 he was fined for being drunk and disorderly in Denford and in 1880 he was again fined for the same offence in Thrapston. He remained in Ringstead as a lodger and worked as a farm labourer. It does not seem that he married and on 9th December 1896, aged just thirty-eight, he died in Thrapston Workhouse.

Arthur, like his brother, Thomas, moved to work in West Ham and then on to Maidstone in Kent, the birthplace of his wife Rose. By 1911 he is a widower there, living with his son, Sidney, and working as a labourer for the Maidstone Borough Council.

The family, of course, like others would have naturally spread as the children grew up but the comparatively early deaths of their parents and the sudden change of lifestyle, caused great hardships to many of the children. In some ways, Elizabeth, the youngest child, seems to have initially suffered the worst of all the siblings.

By 1881 she was a pauper in Thrapston Union Workhouse and just eighteen years old. Normally that would have meant that she was pregnant but we have found no sign of that. When we look at the Census page, we see around her, Harriett Beeby, 53, imbecile; Abigail Clarke, 49, imbecile; Eliza Fairey, 81, blind and imbecile; Elizabeth Dix, 26, imbecile, Mary Ann Matthews, 39, imbecile and Elizabeth Richardson, 33, imbecile. It is likely that they were all in the women's dormitory together. It must have been an unpleasant and, at times, frightening place for a young girl to live. It seems strange that she was not given a temporary home in the New Inn with her brother, Henry, and his young family, but perhaps we can now understand that there may have been good reasons why she preferred to go to the Overseer and present herself at the Porter's Lodge of the Workhouse.

Like a number of women, marriage was a way of escaping from desperate poverty to bearable poverty. In early 1883 she married Thomas Mitchell who was some nine years her senior.

Thomas came from a large family in Raunds. His father, James, was an agricultural labourer and it would have been a hard life for them all. Thomas followed his father into farm work. Elizabeth and Thomas first lived in Raunds and their first child, Ernest Leonard Mitchell, was baptised there on 3rd May 1883, shortly after their marriage. Sadly, Ernest died a little later in the same year. Their second child, Edith, was baptised on 15th February 1885 in Raunds and she survived to have children of her own. The next two children however died very young. Sometime around 1890 the family moved to Chapel Lane, Stanwick and Thomas became a limestone digger at one of the local pits. A son, Fred, had been born in 1888 and baptised in Raunds on 19th February 1888 and another daughter, Florence Maud, had been baptised in June 1890 but she was buried in early 1892 and Fred, who seems to have been baptised again in 1892, followed soon after.

We cannot be sure why Thomas changed his work but a brief article in the Raunds section of the *Northampton Mercury* for 23rd January 1891 gives some insight into the seasonal, unreliable, nature of much farm work and the suffering that this could produce.

> *DISTRESS – In consequence of the prolonged frost the agricultural labourers and all those following outdoor employments have experienced a considerable amount of privation, if not actual distress, since Christmas. Soup and other necessaries have been distributed.*

Elizabeth and Thomas stayed in Stanwick for at least five years but then moved to Knuston Farm Cottages in Knuston, near Irchester. They are there in 1901 and Thomas is now a horsekeeper on a farm. Only Percy (9) and Ellen (5) are till at home for Edith, at 16, is a domestic servant to Walter Woodward, a plumber, and his wife Alice and their young family at 55 Moor Road, Rushden. Such girls were very vulnerable and she gave birth to an illegitimate daughter, Georgina, a couple of years later. Thomas may have had a cottage but it would have been tied to the job and it may be that they lost both for by 1911 they are back in Raunds at 4 Woodruff's Yard off the High Street. Thomas is once again a farm labourer and Elizabeth is working as a charwoman. The two children are bringing some money to the household, Percy as a shoe riveter and Ellen by working half days as a domestic servant.

We are reminded by the 1911 Census that Elizabeth has had seven children, four of whom have died. The small, almost unnoticed, griefs of many families in the nineteenth century. Their daughter Edith had married Harry Marshall and was living in Rotton Row with a family of her own.

Things seem settled but once again fate was against the family for in 1913 Thomas died and five years later in 1918 Elizabeth followed him to the grave. She had lived to see all her three remaining children married and her son Percy, return alive but wounded from the Western Front.

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Maud Emma Kate Burgin (1878 – 1897)

In this brief story of a brief life we can see the useful work that the Workhouse could do but also its limitations and bureaucratic heartlessness.

Maud was the daughter of Edward (or Edwin) Burgin who had been born in Wolverhampton of Irish parents. His wife Sarah Kettle was from Spittlegate in Lincolnshire and the couple had married in the Grantham area in the spring of 1871. In 1861 Sarah had been staying in Ringstead with her much older sister, Mary, who was married to agricultural labourer, Thomas Wills. It was presumably this connection that brought the young couple to the village. Their first two children Mary Ann and Elizabeth were both born in Spittlegate so it seems likely that the couple moved south between 1875 and 1878 when Maud Emma Kate was born, followed by her sister Alice in 1880.

The family were in Carlow in 1881 and moved to London Road by 1891. At first Edward had been an ironstone labourer but by 1891 was a farm labourer, perhaps because of the closure of local pits. The children kept being born, and dying. We know from the 1911 Census that Sarah had fifteen children of which only five survived.

It is Maud Emma Kate with whom we are concerned with here. On 14th August 1896 she gave birth to an illegitimate son in Thrapston Workhouse. We know from a later newspaper report that it was a very difficult birth. The boy was called Bertram Leonard Burgin and it seems that he remains in the Workhouse for he is there in the 1901 Census aged five years old. In the November of the following year Maud was coming to the end of a pregnancy again. Once more she was having a very difficult time.

She gave birth to a female child on the Friday and was attended by Mary Mitchell, the midwife. On the following two days she complained of pains in her stomach and chest. She seemed comfortable on the Saturday night but then deteriorated and, on the Sunday afternoon, Mary Mitchell tried to get an order for a doctor as Sarah, her mother could not leave her daughter and the other children. Dr. Ramsay told her that he would not attend Maud without the money or an order. She went to a

Mr Whitney and then to Mr Fisher who said he was the overseer but could not give her an order. He sent her to Mr O. Smith who also said that he could not give her one and in desperation to one of the Workhouse Guardians called Smith but he too could not help. She told Edwin (Edward) that his daughter needed a doctor but he could not afford to pay for one.

Maud became very ill and, before eight o'clock on the Monday morning, her father went to Thrapston to see Mr. Parish, the Relieving Officer to get an order for a doctor but he said he could only give an order for her to come into the Workhouse.

Edwin pleaded that his daughter was dangerously ill and not fit to be moved but Parish still refused to give a doctor's order. On returning home he found that his daughter was dead.

At the Inquest held on the following Tuesday, at the *Barber's Arms*, Dr. Mackenzie said that Mrs Mitchell, the midwife, had come to see him (presumably when he was busy or out and Doctor Ramsay took the message). When she returned soon after, he told her she need to get an order from the parish but she again returned and said that she could not obtain one. The *Mercury* report continues:

> *. . . he told her to go to the Relieving Officer and also told her what to do with the patient. He gave her some pills and told her to poultice the patient; in fact he told her just the same as he should have done had he attended. . . [As a result of a post mortem examination] he found that the cause of death was puerperal peritonitis*. He did not think that he could have prevented this had he attended the confinement. He could not say if he had been called in sooner he could have saved her life. Deceased was a very unhealthy and bloodless woman. There was no sign of unskilful treatment by the midwife.*
>
> *[*A not uncommon cause of death at this time, in mothers after childbirth, especially if there had been tissue damage during a difficult birth. The use of hands (or instruments), that had not been properly sterilised could also be a cause.]*

The case naturally led to an outcry in Raunds and the Inquest jury asked the Coroner to pass the following resolution to the appropriate authorities:

> *That the jury has heard with consternation that the overseers of Raunds have received no instructions as to the granting of orders in cases of urgency and necessity:- That the jury strongly recommend the Thrapston Board of Guardians to appoint a resident Relieving Officer for the parish of Raunds.*

We see the inadequacies and bureaucratic callousness of the old system which would eventually lead people to call for a 'free' National Health Service.

The Thrapston Board of Guardians met on Tuesday 30th November and considered the criticism levelled at its officers and doctors. The members defended the actions taken and made it clear where they felt the fault lay.

> *The parents must long have known what state this poor girl was in, and it was possible for them to make preparations beforehand. Not only did the father earn 18s. a week, but the girl herself and another daughter and a son were earning money and with the income coming in they could not find fault with the Relieving Officer in refusing to give an order. If he had done so he would not have carried out his duty according to the interests of the Board, because they did not want to encourage parents to neglect their children or encourage people to get*

> *into these immoral ways. . . Mr Lovell pointed out that if the doctor had not put his foot down and got an order he would never get any fees at all.*

The Board decided that:

> *. . . under the circumstances they would pay the expenses of burying and they also exonerated the doctor, the overseers and the Relieving Officer from blame, taking no steps regarding the recommendations to appoint a Relieving Officer for Raunds. – The matter then dropped.*

When we look back through the newspaper reports we see part of the reason for the attitude of the Board to the Burgins. In 1885, while they lived in Ringstead, Edward was charged with leaving his wife and family chargeable to the Thrapston Union. In 1890 he was found guilty of not sending his daughters Alice and Maud to school. In 1895, just two years before Maud's death, her mother's fifteenth and last child was stillborn. The midwife, Ann Wells, went to the doctor to ask him to certify the cause of death but he refused without an order. Joseph Bird, the surgeon said that he did not consider Ann Wells qualified to do such work and that was his reason for denying the certificate. On the requisition of the coroner he had since certified the death. We can see the coming of a more qualified, but often still unaffordable, medical profession. There was little thought for the mother.

The Burgins were a "problem family" and they were clearly labelled as the "undeserving poor". Maud suffered as a result.

The daughter, born just before her young mother's death, did survive and was also called Maud in memory of her mother. By 1911 she was boarding with her brother 'Bertie' in Twywell with a widow called Elizabeth Percival. In the First World War Bertie enlisted with the Royal Sussex Regiment and died of his wounds on 26th April 1917. There appears to have been no correspondence about obtaining the medals due to him at the end of the war.

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Chapter Ten

The Cycling Revolution

Ernest Cottingham, Nathaniel Fox & Ellen Warren

We have seen in other biographies how, in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, much of the village life for the next century was set in place**.** Mains sewerage, the Parish Council, telephones, street lighting (oil at first), organised football leagues and the bicycle.

Although there are stories of early bicycles, the first bicycle type vehicle that we really know existed was the French 'Draisine', or English hobby horse which was made of wood with iron shod wheels. It had no pedals but was propelled by pushing with your feet on the ground, rather like a child's ride-on toy. The year 1819 was its heyday in England when the Regency dandies rode them round Vauxhall Gardens and the streets of London. They quickly became a menace and heavy fines were imposed for riding them on the pavements (a continuing problem). The craze was quickly over.

The next big breakthrough came in the 1860s when the velocipede or 'boneshaker was invented. The frame was increasingly made of iron and the front wheels were driven by the use of pedals attached to its axle. It was called the boneshaker because of its stiff frame and iron wheels, although later it did gain solid rubber tyres. It is unlikely that many ordinary people rode these expensive, cumbersome beasts although many performers tried to include this new craze in their act. Dozens of songs were written for the Music Hall and under the title. 'The Velocipede Mania' the *Worcester Journal* for Saturday 21st August 1869 had the following article:

> *A velocipede artist gives an epitome of his accomplishments. He states that during the performances he "draws a four-wheel cab, containing four persons, runs up an incline, leaps twelve feet into the air while on the veloce, performs with chairs, bottles &c., carries six men at one time, and within a space of eight feet." A French illustrated paper publishes some special hints this week for the use of these new machines. Amongst them is a sketch of a funeral conducted on velocipedes. French humour is nothing unless it is either grim or nasty.*

A little earlier in the year, on April 10th there was an advertisement in the *General Advertiser* for:

THE NEW BICYCLE OR VELOCIPEDE

It invited, 'Gentlemen wishing to inspect this favourite vehicle' to do so at 'Mr. Wilson's Coach and Harness Manufactory in Gold Street, Northampton. In July there was an advertisement for a 'Grand Display of Fireworks, Velocipede Races'.

Once again, its time was quite short. The problem was that with the pedals directly on the front wheel the speed that it could attain was quite limited. This was solved at first by increasing the size of the front wheel. In order to make them mountable and allow the rider to reach the pedals still mounted on the front axle, the rear wheel was similarly reduced. The 'Ordinary' or to use, what was a derogatory name, 'Penny Farthing' was born. At the same time the all-metal frame was lightened. We now see the Penny Farthing as rather sedate, elegant machines but the reality was very

different. They were fast and dangerous and were mainly ridden by young men from well-off families.

We know that at least some bicycles were being ridden around Ringstead however because the *Northampton Mercury* report on the Baptist Sunday School Feast, on the 6th August 1881, states that:

> *At an early part of the day a bicycle accident befell R. Pearson, a member of the Ringstead Band, who was riding his machine and carrying his trombone. The instrument slipped between the front wheel and suddenly sent the rider over the handles. In his descent his chin came into contact with the trombone and he suffered severe cuts and bruising.*

Was this a boneshaker or a penny farthing? One can only guess that it was the former. Ralph Pearson was a twenty-nine year old married shoemaker who lived in London End and one suspects that it may have been an old machine. Was it the same bicycle that his younger brother, Stephen, was caught riding without lights on 31st May 1883. Stephen was about sixteen years old and he was let off with a payment of 6s. 6d costs and the police consented to waive a conviction.

The *Northampton Mercury* reported on 6th June 1885 on an American, Thomas Stevens, who was on a 'Velocipede Journey Round the World'. Thomas had started out on April 22nd 1884 and the adventure took him three years. He wrote of his journey and we see from the photographs that he was in fact riding a Columbia Standard model high-wheeler' or a penny farthing. This confusion over names continues and there were numerous disputes, when new laws came in about bicycle lights or riding on the pavement, as to what the law was referring. We sometimes have to infer what type of bicycle was being described by the date.

Again it is unlikely that many were owned in Ringstead although some might have been seen passing through. It is difficult to imagine it on the still often rutted and muddy roads. A man writing in the *Lincolnshire Chronicle* on the 24th October 1882 told of his tricycle ride from Northumberland to London and back in three weeks. He complained about the terrible state of some of the main roads and also mentioned his ride from Oundle south, stopping briefly at Ringstead to look at the church and especially the East Window. His tricycle, a "Salvo", could be folded together to go through doorways. Earlier, in 1881, the Prince of Wales, the future Edward VII, ordered a "modern tricycle" for one of his daughters. It did seem that the tricycle might become the main type of cycle for everyday use. There were also experiments to produce a motorised version. In August 1880 the *Manchester Evening News* carried a report of an advertisement headed, "Every Man His Own Locomotive" in which an "American mechanician" claimed to have perfected a tricycle:

> . . . "to emancipate mankind from the tyranny of the railroads". By means of compressed air, pumped into an iron reservoir, constituting the seat of the rider, the tricycle in question can be propelled forwards at the rate of five-and-twenty miles an hour; and the inventor proposes to erect pumping stations in town and country districts at which the travelling tricyclist will be enabled, on payment of a trifling fee, to renew his supply of pneumatic force. Ladies, who are at present debarred by sumptuary considerations and muscular disabilities from economising time and cab fares by aid of the velocipede, will assuredly welcome an appliance which will waft them comfortably seated and without the least physical exertion to their favourite shops at twice the speed of a parliamentary train.

It is interesting to note that at least in radical Manchester there was no moral outrage at a woman riding a cycle. "Sumptuary" normally refers to one being economical but I wonder if it refers to the bulkiness of dresses making riding a velocipede impossible.

Nothing seems to come of this and the 'safety bicycle' was invented in 1885. The big change was that the back wheel was driven by a chain onto a cogwheel on the back axle. Suddenly the need for a large front wheel had disappeared and with a lighter frame (although heavy by modern standards) the modern bicycle was born. Some historians say that the bicycle was not a vehicle of the working classes until the First World War. This does not appear to have been the case in Ringstead and some of the shoemakers and their sons and daughters seem to have taken to the bicycle in the 1890s.

This period was not a good one for the local military boot and shoe trade and it was only the Boer War at the end of the century that alleviated the position for a time. Nevertheless the shoemakers probably had more disposable income than many working people. They were also a radical group and, in Ringstead there was a strong temperance movement. The early history of the bicycle was tied up with these other movements in a way that we might find surprising today. Working people were gaining more leisure time and the bicycle gave them a cheap access to the world that they could now reach in a day's journey.

Author's uncle, Cyril Hardwick, probably in Stanwick about 1917.

You can still see the influence of the penny farthing.

Probably in 1890 a bicycle club was formed in Ringstead. Certainly we know that on Saturday 3rd October 1891 the club celebrated its first annual gathering with a tea at the *Axe and Compass*. There was also a grand costume parade of the village and a run to Thrapston. I have not found further

reports so it may be that it merged with the Raunds Cycle Club. Nevertheless it does show that a good number in the village owned a bicycle

Previously that year, on Saturday 8th August 1891 two of its members, Ernest Cottingham and Nathaniel Fox, left Ringstead at 4 o'clock in the morning bound for London. They were attempting to beat the record set by a Raunds rider, W. Wheatley, who had ridden to London and back in just eighteen hours.

Ernest had been born in 1871 to John and Martha Cottingham and in 1881 he was living with them in the High Street. Next door is his young cousin Edwin Turner Cottingham, who became a master clockmaker and whose story we have already told in *Ringstead People*. By 1891 Ernest's family was living at 1 Little Lane, Shop Street but it is likely that this is a different name for the same house. He was now twenty years old and a shoemaker.

His partner in the cycle ride was Nathaniel Fox, also the son of a shoemaker. He was living with his parents, Joseph and Dinah in Leveratt's Row in Carlow Street in the 1891 Census. He was only seventeen years old and a shoemaker too.

Just a few months after the 1891 Census the two young men had set out on their adventure. They arrived back in Ringstead at five minutes past eight in the evening. They had completed the journey in sixteen hours and five minutes. Unfortunately, the newspaper report gives no details of the journey but presumably they went straight down the A6. The journey would probably been about 145 miles in all so they had averaged about nine miles an hour.

We can only imagine the welcome they received from their club mates and other villagers when they returned. Ernest Cottingham married Sarah Daisy Braine in 1897. I wonder if the couple were teased with the popular Music Hall song of the time:

> *Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer do,*
> *I'm half crazy all for the love of you.*
> *It won't be a stylish marriage,*
> *I can't afford a carriage,*
> *But you'd look sweet upon the seat*
> *Of a bicycle built for two*.

As we have seen, there was much experimentation during the last quarter of the nineteenth century with bicycles, tricycles, quadricycles and tandems and even impractical designs of cycles for many riders.

Cycle racing now featured in many local feasts and athletic meetings. The *Mercury* reporter seems a little disgruntled from the start in having to attend the Ringstead Feast in September 1892:

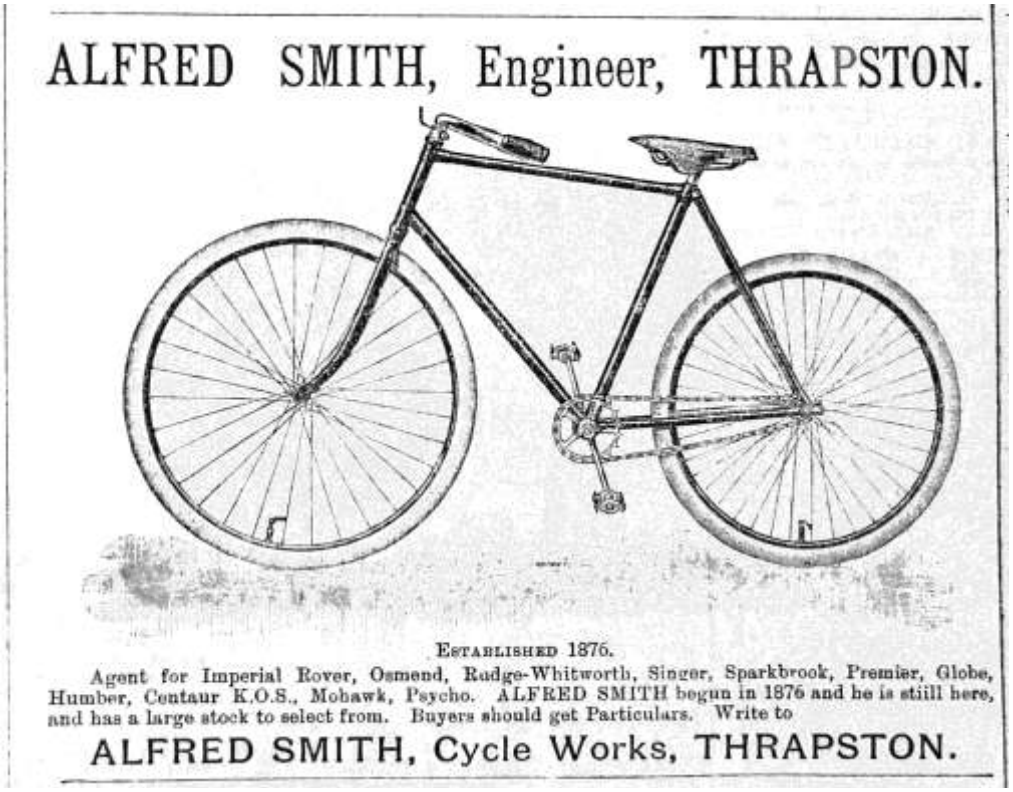
> *Coming late in the season in the midst of harvest, and also being just in front of the Rushden and Finedon festivals, Ringstead Feast does not fall at a good time for holiday making. Still it is always a time for many family reunions, for pleasuring in various forms, and this year's festival, which commenced on Sunday, is no exception to the rule. Indeed there seems to be a little more life than usual during the last few years put into it.*

He later reports:

A good course was laid out for the foot-racing but for the bicycles it was awful. The sport was not very interesting and the fields were as a rule limited.

Many of the same problems that people complain about today were causing anger in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The *Stamford Mercury* reported on 14th September 1894 that Mr R. Smith at the Wisbech Town Council meeting complained about the danger of 'persons cycling on the footpaths of the town . . . contrary to the bye-laws'. The *Mercury* had reports, in 1901 of Alfred W. Worthington from Denford who was summoned for riding a bicycle on the highway at Ringstead on June 5th 'at a quarter past eleven p.m. without having a lighted lamp attached'. In 1903 Frank York of Raunds and Thomas Pentelow of Ringstead were also summoned for riding bicycles without lights. We see that bicycles were far from uncommon on the Ringstead roads.

If we look at the local advertisements for cycles in the *Wellingborough News* we see that, very quickly, the cycle that we would recognize today had evolved. We see the hollow-tubed triangular frame with Dunlop's new invention of the pneumatic tyre, and the chain driven back wheel, but still with no signs of brakes (although some models certainly did have brakes fitted). It may be that this model had a "fixed wheel" which meant that you braked by slowing or stopping the pedals going round.



Wellingborough News 1st March 1895
From Wellingborough Museum Archive

We have said that the cycling had a political and social element in its early days and this is particularly true of the fight for equality for women. The early cycles had been impossible for women to use but with the introduction of the safety cycle women too took to the roads. The radical Scottish poet, Robert Buchanan wrote in the 1892 a *Bicycle Song (for Women)* which has the lines:

Praise to the Luck which sent me
The magical wheel I ride,
And now I know God meant me
To match Man side by side!
Wings the good Lord has lent me,
And oh, the world is wide!

By the end of the century women in Ringstead seem to have been riding bicycles with little comment. We know this from the sad case of Vinnie Ellen Warren, who was the daughter of Joseph and Mary Ann Warren. Mary Ann Phillips had married Joseph Warren in1873. She was just eighteen and he was some fourteen years her senior, but still a young man. He died, however, just three years later and was buried in the churchyard on October 19th 1875. Vinnie Ellen had been born just a few months earlier.

Mary Ann married again to an Ironstone labourer, Albert Orpin and they lived in the Seivers Buildings off the Carlow Road near to Mary Ann's family. They had one son, called Leonard born in 1889 and by 1891 the family were in Carlow Street with Police Constable John Puttnam lodging with them.

Vinnie, or Ellen as she seems mostly to have been called, appears to have been a bright girl. Like many Ringstead girls she became an army boot closer probably working in one of the local factories. She had also become a nurse in the Ringstead St John Ambulance Corps.

As we have seen in the stories of John Sawford and the Police Constable the Boer War came at the end of the century. A war in which disease was the greatest killer of the British troops and where some of the lessons taught by Florence Nightingale about hygiene in the Crimea had to be relearned.

Two of the Ringstead St John Ambulance Corps went to South Africa and John Sawford did not return. Although there were professional female nurses in South Africa there was reluctance by the army chiefs to send sufficient of them and, unlike the men, the St John female nurses were not used.

Along with the rest of the nation, she would have rejoiced when, in 1900, news of the Relief of Mafeking came through. On Saturday 19th May there were celebrations, bonfires and torchlight processions in towns and villages throughout Britain. On the following Monday the boot and shoe factory where Ellen worked as a machinist gave a half holiday to all its staff. She and her friends decided to hire bicycles and have some fun. Ellen was not a 'very confident' cyclist so she decided to have a practice and she, accompanied by her friends, went up the Raunds Road. When they reached the top Ellen started back down on her own, with the wind at her back. It seems the equivalent of learning to swim by jumping in at the deep end.

At the same time Charles Underwood was driving a dray for the Wellingborough brewery, *Campbell Praed and Sons*, loaded with mineral water, slowly up the hill to Raunds. He suddenly saw Ellen careering down the hill towards him and tried to pull up. Ellen was on the wrong side of the road and had lost control. She crashed into the side of the dray, cracking her head against the large brake block. It was at a point where the road narrowed and it is possible that she caught some old iron railings first. It is not clear just how close to the crossroads the accident occurred but the postcard below shows that there was little sign of rights of way and wheel tracks cut across the corner.

The driver of the dray and his mate as well as Ellen's horror-struck companions rushed to her side but she died almost immediately. They carried her to her house in Carlow Road and the doctor's

assistant came to her there. Dr Joseph Bird, himself, came from Thrapston and attended Ellen a little later but it was all too late. The Inquest was held at the Swan Inn on Tuesday 22nd May.

The bottom of the road from Raunds in the early Twentieth Century

Author's own postcard

In the Cemetery there is a large gravestone for Vinnie Ellen Warren. "who met with her death by accident" and the first two lines of the epitaph read:

> *We cannot Lord the purpose see*
> *But all is well that is done by thee.*

Her mother and stepfather are in the 1901 Census at 21 Carlow Road with their son Leonard. Albert Orpin had become a labourer in a sewerage works. Mary Ann died in 1904 aged forty-nine years, but in one of those unexpected changes that we have come to expect in these stories Albert and Leonard sailed for America . It may be that Albert's brother had emigrated to America first. They arrived in Ellis Island, New York on 18th August 1905 on board the *Baltic*. They settled in Alden, Hardin County, in Iowa and there both lived their lives into old age.

It is interesting to note that somewhere locally bicycles were available for hire for those who could not afford them and it may be that for most the cycling was a leisure activity rather than a general way of getting about. It is difficult to be precise but average earning would have been around £1 8s. a week so it would have been around two to three months wages to buy a new bicycle, although many would have bought them on 'easy terms'.

References

Ringstead Censuses (www.Ancestry.co.uk).
Ringstead Parish Registers (Northampton Record Office and www.rushdenheritage.co.uk).
https://familysearch.org

Northampton Mercury, General Advertiser, Worcester Journal.
(www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).
Wellingborough News (Wellingborough Museum).

Local Bicycle Makers, Lightstrung, selling bicycles from £8 10s. to £14

One of a series of regular advertisements in the Wellingborough News
From Wellingborough Museum Archive

Chapter Eleven

Vicars and Curates

Isaac Gaskarth: Charles Proby: John Watson: William de Pipe Belcher: Alfred John Sandilands: Percival Richard Renorden Sandilands: Edward Sandford: Edward Armitage Sandford: William Oram Leadbitter: Andrew Cavendish Neely: Charles William Cotes. (Also some curates including Robert Morgan Vane: Thomas Brownrigg: Harrison Packard: Thomas Martin Symonds: Benjamin Clay: Charles William Chalklen: Edward Bowman: John Gurney Rogers: Edward Kitson.)

It may come as some surprise that the smaller village of Denford had for centuries been the senior church of the Denford cum Ringstead joint parish. The two 'vicarages' were linked from before 1535 and Ringstead was described as a chapelry which meant that weddings could not be solemnized there. Nevertheless the Ringstead Marriage Register starts on November 26th1569. The relationship between the two churches is therefore somewhat unclear and it may be that the incumbent did not always live in a vicarage in Denford in the early decades of the century. John Glassbrook, an eighteenth century vicar, wrote a Memorandum in the Denford Parish Registers in 1763:

> *When I was first Vicar I found the two Parishes contesting about Ecclesiastical Superiority. I happen'd this year to meet accidentally with Brown Willis Esq. (one of the most eminent Antiquarians this Day in England) who answer'd me upon good Grounds that Denford was the Mother Church and that Ringstead originally was no more than a Chapel of Ease. This information is able to support itself but what in my opinion adds weight and strength to it is This, That the Parish of Ringstead is oblig'd to repair some Part of the Wall belonging to the Churchyard of Denford and I am credibly inform'd that it can be proved at this time by living Witnesses that it has been so repaired.*

There was certainly a vicarage in Ringstead in first part of the nineteenth century and this seems to have become the residence of the curate.

Certainly the same 'incumbent' had always had charge of both churches until recent times and these are recorded as far back as Peter of Chester in 1237. Of course, originally these priests would have been Roman Catholic. Starting with Henry VIII's break with Rome the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries were a time of religious turmoil when the church was splintered high and low. In 1662, after the restoration of Charles II to the throne after Cromwell's Commonwealth, an *Act of Uniformity* was introduced. This laid down that all clergy and Government officials should take an oath to follow the rites and prayers prescribed in a *new Book of Common Prayer.* Over two thousand clergymen refused and were expelled from the Church of England. Henry Raymond, the curate at Ringstead was one of these 'Two Thousand Worthies'. Another of these 'Worthies' from Desborough set up a church at Rowell (Rothwell). The local nonconformists made the long trek there until in 1714 forty-three people broke off from Rothwell and set up the Baptist Church in Ringstead. The division and occasional bitterness of this break from the Church of England smouldered in Ringstead throughout the nineteenth century, erupting into rows over education in the 1890s**.**

Isaac Gaskarth (1752 -1811) VICAR 1777 - 1811

We are looking at the nineteenth century in these lives but our first vicar is Isaac Gaskarth who was appointed the vicar of Denford cum Ringstead on 18th July 1777. These 'livings' were owned by wealthy patrons who would install their chosen man, although their choice had to be affirmed by the Bishop. In Isaac's case his patron was the local Lord of the Manor, Leonard Burton.

Isaac had been born in Crosthwaite in Cumberland and was christened there on 26thNovember 1752. The exact sequence of Isaac's career is a little unclear but we do know that he was ordained as a deacon at the Bishop of Durham's Chapel within the Castle at Bishop Auckland. Two years later, on 13th July 1777, he was ordained by the Bishop of Durham as a priest and five days later was appointed to the vacant vicarage at Denford cum Ringstead.

The Gaskarths of north-west England were linked to the aristocracy but any connection of Isaac's was a distant one. We know that he was admitted as a 'Sizar' to St John's College, Cambridge. A Sizar would have had a grant probably in the form of free meals or lower lodging costs. In return he would, perhaps, have had to do menial jobs for the better-off, full fee-paying students. Exactly how and when he gained a degree, M.A. and Bachelor of Divinity is again not clear. It seems that his B.D was obtained as a 'Ten Year Man' at Easter 1790. Isaac would have matriculated (enrolled) at St John's College on July 7th 1779 and then, as long as he was over twenty-four years of age, he could qualify after ten years had passed without having been tested in any way. As the Cambridge M.A. could then be obtained, again merely by the passage of time, it appears that his studying was not a great hardship for Isaac. Is it possible that he spent some of the term in Cambridge and much of his parochial work was done by a curate? This 'Ten Year' practice was not often used and was abolished in the middle of the nineteenth century

One of Isaac's earliest actions after he was appointed vicar was to apply, in 1778, for a Gamekeeper's Licence. This may seem a little odd for the local vicar. Was he moonlighting for extra income? The reason for his application can be explained by the laws of the 'game' at this date which would soon be challenged and mainly swept away.

E.V. Bovill explains, in *English Country Life 1780- 1830*, how the system worked:

> *Under an Act of 1671 the killing of game was prohibited, in general terms, to all except owners of land worth £100 a year, lessees of land worth £150 a year, the eldest sons of esquires or of persons of higher degree and the owners of franchises. A curious anomaly was that if an esquire or a person of higher degree had not the necessary qualifications to kill game, his eldest son was not debarred from doing so. Another was that although a lord of the manor might grant the right to kill game to his gamekeeper he might not do so to his younger sons. This led to younger sons sometimes engaging themselves as keepers in order to secure the right to shoot. The owners of only a few acres could not enjoy the game their fields harboured, and which destroyed their crops, unless they could persuade a qualified neighbour to shoot it for them.*

It seems that Isaac was obtaining a Gamekeeper's Licence so that he could shoot and fish on his patron, Leonard Burton's land and also, perhaps, on some of his neighbours'.

The living must have suited Isaac for he stayed thirty-four years in his post. We see, in the *Northampton Mercury* of 7thApril 1804, that he was supplementing his income by taking paying

students into Denford Vicarage. He advertises for ‘four young gentlemen’ to be given lessons in ’the Rudiments of the Greek and Latin Languages preparatory to their Entrance into any of the public schools’. It is from this advertisement that we know that he has an M.A. but whether obtained through hard study is unclear. We will briefly refer to this advertisement again.

In 1806 Isaac also took over as Rector of Islip, a living with a value of £275 a year. It was still possible to hold more than one living with the permission of the Bishop. Of course today, with smaller congregations and difficult economic times the Church of England has again been forced to gather parishes together under one vicar or rector. At this time it was often a way of gaining extra income without doing anything for it. It appears that at this point a clergyman called **Daniel Crofts** was appointed as curate of Ringstead. We can see this from the Parish Registers. From July 1796 until December 1808 all the christenings and until January 28th 1809 all the burials are performed by Isaac but from then until Isaac’s death they are all registered by the curate, Daniel Crofts.

Daniel came from a family of clergymen in Lewes in Sussex where Croft memorials still line the walls of the church. He had attended Kimbolton School and then Christ's College, Cambridge where he gained his B.A. in 1809 (or possibly late 1808). His first post was as curate of Ringstead and he then moved on to become Rector of Shelton in Bedfordshire where he continued until his death in 1866. Once appointed, barring gross misconduct, a vicar had a job for life whereas a curate had no security of tenure and could be removed at a whim.

Returning to Isaac Gaskarth, it has often proved more difficult to fill in the details of the clergymen's families than for most of their congregation. They may be at best only a brief footnote in Burke's Peerage but, as with many of the upper classes, their social lives often covered a wide geographical area and few, if any, were baptised, married and had children near Denford or Ringstead. Isaac Gaskarth was no exception. As we have said, he came from Cumberland and in his Will he mentions his sister, Sarah, and a Thomas Gaskarth, who is almost certainly his brother. We are sure, therefore, that he was the son of John and Sarah Gaskarth and had, besides Sarah and Thomas, at least two other brothers, John and James.

Unfortunately for us, there are a number of Isaac Gaskarths in Cumberland. We know that there was an Isaac who agreed to a bond of £200 for a licence to marry Elizabeth Coward on 29th December 1766 in the parish of Windermere. This couple had at least four children of whom two were called Isaac, the first named having died at just four years of age. Another Isaac Gaskarth married Jane Porter at Crosthwaite in 1791 and had three children. Our Isaac would have been very young for the first marriage and for the second would have been living in the Ringstead area. There was also the ambiguous evidence of the advertisement in the *Northampton Mercury* on 7th April 1804 for "four young gentlemen" to study the "Rudiments of the Greek and Latin Languages". The place for the teaching is "eight miles from Wellingborough and four from Thrapston" so it is certainly Ringstead or Great Addington rather than Denford but there are four clergymen to whom applicants can apply so we cannot be completely certain that the "Married Clergyman" who is to do the teaching is Isaac. There is also no sign of the burial of a wife of Isaac after this time.

All we can say is that there is a possibility that Isaac had been married. We do know that he did marry by licence to Rebecca West on 9th August 1810. His wife was a twenty-seven year old "spinster" and Isaac, some thirty years her senior, is described as a "bachelor". If this was his first marriage he would not be the last Ringstead clergyman to marry late in life.

Isaac made a Will later that same year, on 12th October 1810, and he died just over a year later on 2nd December 1811. He was fifty-eight years old. One of his first recorded acts in the Parish had

been to take out a Gamekeeper's Licence most probably so that he could fish on the Nene. One of his last was to bequeath to Lord of the Manor, Leonard Burton:

> *. . . his fishing-rods, fishing lines, hooks, nets and whatever belongs to the amusement of angling*

Ringstead had, and still has, a name for its fishing and Isaac would not be the last incumbent to be a field sportsman. He was also something of a craftsman it seems for he left to:

> *. . . Thomas Porter, son of John Porter [his long-serving Parish Clerk] his Turning Lathe and all my tools belonging to the Art of Turning. Also I give and bequeath all other Tools, Instruments and Goods in my Workshop to my godson William Geary of Denford Lodge. Also I give and bequeath to the said William Geary the sum of Ten Pounds.*

He left similar amounts to Jane, the daughter of Ann Geary and to his Parish Clerk, John Porter as well as to Thomas Gaskarth, of Bridge End near Keswick, for the maintenance of Isaac's sister Sarah.

After these few bequests he left the residue of his estate, including a house in Great Addington, to his new wife, Rebecca. In the Poll Book of 1806 Isaac is shown as having a vote at Denford but his residence is at Ringstead so it may be that the Vicarage for the joint Parish was in Ringstead at this time. It was in Ringstead churchyard that he was buried on December 9th 1811.

Charles Proby (c1765 – 1822) VICAR 1812 - 1822

The next vicar appointed was Charles Proby who was born on 20th January 1765. He was the eldest son of Captain Charles Proby who was the Commissioner of the Naval Dockyard at Chatham. Once again he was on the fringes of the aristocracy. He was the nephew of the Earl of Carysfoot and the family seat was Elton Hall in Huntingdonshire. Charles married twice, firstly, in 1791, to Susan Cherry whose father was Chairman of the Victualling Board and secondly, on 6thJanuary 1796 to his cousin Catherine Proby who was the second daughter of Baptist Proby, the Dean of Lichfield.

In 1781, at the age of sixteen, he had matriculated at St John's College, Cambridge, as had many of the Denford cum Ringstead vicars of this period. He gained his B.A. in 1785 and his M.A. in 1789. Charles then entered the Inner Temple in 1789 but seems never to have pursued a legal career. For many of his class the choice was the military, the law or the clergy. It was the latter that he chose for he was ordained as a deacon at Winchester, in 1790, and as a priest by the Bishop of Peterborough on 29thJune, 1792. His path was set and he became a curate at Tansor in the same year. A year later he was appointed the Rector of Stanwick. He also seems to have acquired the parish of Slawston in Leicestershire in 1802. In 1808 he was 'collated' by the Bishop of Lincoln to the Prebend of Lafford or New Sleaford. This was by this time just an honorary title, usually given to senior clergymen for good service and meant he could sit in the prebendal stalls, which were behind the choir, when attending a service.

On the 12th March 1812, following the death of Isaac Gaskarth, Charles was appointed to Denford with the chapelry of Ringstead. Except at his appointment and death he always seems to be referred to as the Rector of Stanwick and it would seem that most of the work of the joint parish fell to his younger curates. In 1812 the curate was **Robert Morgan Vane** who again was connected to the aristocracy. He was born 4thOctober 1785, the eldest son of Morgan Vane of Bilby Hall in Nottinghamshire. Unusually for the local clergy at this time, he went in 1804 to Emmanuel College in

Cambridge gaining his B.A. in 1808 and his M.A. in 1811. He was ordained as a priest in 1812 and became curate of Denford and Ringstead in the same year. He moved on to become Rector of Lowick and Islip in 1816 which he held until 1842, a post that he combined with being chaplain to the Duke of Dorset.

Robert Morgan Vane's successor as curate was **Thomas Brownrigg**. He had been the curate at Rushden and on the 6thJuly 1816 was appointed to Denford cum Ringstead. He was there for just two years, which was often about the length of time that curates served in a small parish before moving on to another curacy or vicarage.

It was during Thomas's time as curate that the frame for the bells was repaired. On Saturday February 8th 1817 the *Northampton Mercury* had an advertisement for:

> *Any competent Person who wishes to engage in putting the FRAMES of the BELLS **in complete repair** , are requested to inspect the same and give in their respective Estimate to JOSEPH BETTS and WM GEARY. Churchwardens of the Parish of Ringstead, Northamptonshire*
>
> *Ringstead January 29th 1817*

The church fabric was perhaps beginning to show the signs of rot and decay that would leave it in a ruinous state some forty years later.

We know little more of what he did apart from officiating at 35 baptisms, 10 weddings and 15 burials, but we do have some idea of how his house was furnished. The *Northampton Mercury* for 28thFebruary 1818 has an advertisement for the sale of the household furniture and other effects of the Reverend Mr. Brownrigg of Ringstead who was 'removing to Yorkshire'. The fact that he is said to be 'of Ringstead' implies that he was living in the vicarage there. The sale is of:

> *Handsome mahogany dining, Pembroke and other Tables; modern mahogany Chairs (horse-hair Seats);Scotch Carpets, hearth Rugs, mahogany writing Desk, ditto dinner Tray, tea Trays, Caddie &c; Bath Stove, Grates, Fenders and fire Irons, four-post and other Bedsteads, in cotton and check Furniture; well seasoned feather and flock Beds, Blankets and Counterpanes; bed-side Carpets; dressing Tables and Glasses, oak dining and other Tables, oak Bureau; deal painted Bookcase, with Drawers; Rumford Roaster, complete; two kitchen Grates and kitchen Requisites in general, in Copper, Brass, Iron, Tin &c., Glass and Earthenware and various other Articles, which are expressed in Catalogues to be had at the White Hart Inn, Thrapston, Green Dragon, Higham Ferrers, at the Place of Sale; and of the Auctioneers, Irthlingborough.*

Thomas moved to Bramham in Yorkshire and in 1841 we see him there aged 76 as a "Clerk in Orders". Looking after him is a female servant called Ann Winterburn. Would it be a lonely, solitary decline into his grave? Not quite. On 26th September 1844, aged 79 he married 36 year old Ann. It seems to have been a happy marriage for Thomas, when he died some four years later, left an annuity of £50 as well as:

> *All my furniture plate linen china pictures wearing apparel and such of my books as she shall select and other household effects of which I shall die possessed unto my dear wife Ann.*

In 1818, at about the time that Thomas Brownrigg was leaving, the Government had set up a Select Committee which was asking every parish to make returns on what educational facilities were

available for the poor. The returns for Stanwick, Denford and Ringstead were signed by Charles Proby but it looks as if the information for the latter two parishes was produced by a curate called '**H. Packarde'** and countersigned by Charles as the vicar. This curate is not on the Church of England clergymen online database but we know that it was Harrison Packard. The return for Stanwick is interesting in that we see a little of Charles Proby's attitude. He observes

> *There are a few of the poor who cannot afford something towards the education of their children but they put them to the lace pillow as soon as they can use their fingers; and when strong enough the boys are employed in husbandry.*

The return for Ringstead reveals that there is a Sunday School, supported by voluntary contributions in which about 40 boys and girls are taught. There are also two day schools kept by women in which about 24 children are taught at their parents' expense. At Denford we see there is also a Sunday School and 'a lace school kept by a woman, the parents paying for the education of their children.' It is in the final column where the entry for Stanwick given above had been made and in this column the entry for Ringstead has a different tone.

> *The generality of the poor cannot afford the means of education for their children and would be glad to possess them.*

Harrison Packard(e) was not long in the parish and from May 12th 1818 until December 7th of the same year he conducted sixteen baptisms. It may be that after the resignation of Thomas Brownrigg a temporary curate had to be drafted in. He was the son of a Suffolk Rector and had been born in his father's parish of Middleton in 1783. He had gained his B.A. and M.A. at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. Apart from the short stay at Ringstead he spent all his career in Suffolk, finally taking over the Rectorship of Fordley with Middleton and the Vicarage of Westleton, on his father's death in November 1819. There is a memorial in Holy Trinity Church, Middleton to his father and also to Harrison and his wife Esther who died just two months before him in 1860.

Thomas Martin Symonds replaced Harrison Packard as curate on the 7th June 1819. He followed a well-trodden path. He had been born in Bury St. Edmunds on 13th April 1796 and after school in his home town he went to St John's College, where he gained a B.A. in 1818 and an M.A. in 1819. He was ordained a deacon at Salisbury on June 6th1819 and was appointed the curate at Denford cum Ringstead in 1819 and the following year ordained as a priest. Without delving too deeply into his pedigree he had apparent links, as many of the Ringstead clergy did, with the Irish gentry. In fact the Carysfoot title was a late ennoblement of the Proby family to which the Vicar was closely related, who lived just down the Nene at Elton Hall. In 1822 Thomas collected, with the help of the churchwardens, the sum of £10 11s. 9d. in aid of the *Fund for the Relief of the Distressed Irish*.

As later reports indicate, Thomas would have found Ringstead an appealing place to serve his curacy. An advertisement for a cottage with distant views of Ringstead in the *Northampton Mercury* on 17th July 1819, enthuses:

> *To a Sportsman, this Situation is truly desirable, as the River abounds with Fish and the Country with Game; and as a Hunting Box it is particularly adapted, being within a convenient Distance of three or four Packs of Fox Hounds*.

Thomas went on to become the curate at Elton where he lodged for many years with Valentine Jelly and his family in Dial House. Valentine was a farmer and former miller. He had a daughter, Ann, who Thomas married on 23rd April 1840. After their marriage they moved into the Rectory, for the incumbent, Dr Fisher had been appointed to be Master of the Charterhouse, and from then on spent

little time in the Elton parish. It may seem unusual that Thomas remained a curate for over twenty years. Alan G. Clarke, who has written a detailed history of Elton gives a clear reason why he stayed so long. He tells us, that according to some villagers at the time, he was:

> *. . . less than adequate in his parish duties and more addicted to the pursuit of field sports than the well-being of his parishioners.*

Throughout the nineteenth century hunting, and to a lesser extent, fishing were criticised as cruel sports and in particular, the hunting clergyman was condemned and ridiculed. Writing just before the start of the century William Gilpin remembered:

> *. . . hearing a story of a clergyman who was not remarkable for neglecting, at least the outward part of his duty; but once unhappily forgot it through his love of hunting. He was eagerly engaged in a fox-chase, when the fox* ***took to earth****, as they call it: on which he cried out, "Gentlemen, I must leave you: This puts me in mind that I have a corpse to bury at four o'clock this evening; and I fear I shall be an hour too late."*

By 1865, when Anthony Trollope published his *Hunting Sketches* in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the criticism of the "Hunting Parson" was getting more vociferous. Trollope defended the clergy from this constant condemnation of them indulging in almost any pastime believing that, "it has a very strong tendency to keep out of the Church that very class, the younger sons of country gentlemen, whom all Churchmen would wish to enter it". He adds, however:

> *But not the less is the general feeling very strong against the hunting parson and not the less will it remain so in spite of anything that I may say. Under these circumstances our friend the hunting parson usually rides as though he were more or less under a cloud. . . He is never natural in his self-talk as is any other man. He either flies at his own cloth at once, making some false apology for his presence, telling you that he is there just to see the hounds, and hinting to you his own knowledge that he has no business to ride after them; or else he drops his profession altogether, and speaks to you in a tone which makes you feel that you dare not speak to him about his parish. You can talk to the banker about his banking, the brewer about his brewing, the farmer about his barley, or the landlord about his land; but to a hunting parson of this latter class, you may not say a word about the church.*

Nevertheless, it is a pleasure to read Thomas's clear neat hand in the Registers and he officiated at some 73 baptisms, 12 marriages and 30 burials during his time in Ringstead and is very rarely replaced by a "locum".

We will see that Thomas Symonds was not the last Denford and Ringstead clergyman to enjoy the chase but by the end of the century when Oscar Wilde famously described fox-hunting as , "the unspeakable in full pursuit of the uneatable", the time of the hunting parson had passed, although there were a few who still rode to hounds until the 1960s.

On July 3rd1822 Charles Proby died. He was always a shadowy figure in the background and we do not know how much his presence was known in Ringstead. John Wade wrote, ”The Black Book or Corruption Unmasked” between 1820 and 1823 which was a popular book at the time. In it he listed the ways that the Establishment gave public monies to their friends, supporters and relatives. In the case of the Church of England he shows how charges such as “Surplice Fees” once intended for the poor, were now taken as part of a clergyman’s income. He also told about the illegal but continuing practice of the selling of preferment (putting someone in a living subject to the bishop’s approval) and railed against the pluralists who had a number of livings or paid posts at the same time. He adds:

We hardly need remark that, those who are in possession of the greater number and most valuable benefices are connected by marriage, politics, or in some other way with those who have the disposal of them. Indeed, it is impossible to peruse the list of dignitaries and highly beneficed clergymen, without remarking that most of them are "honourable lumber", who have been handed over to the Church, from inability to succeed in the more arduous professions of the law, the Army, or Navy.

John Wade then gives us a "Peep at the Pluralists" by listing all the clergymen with more than one living, usually with a poorly paid curate to do the work. Among them is Charles Proby whom he lists as having the following livings:

Waddeson, Stanwick, Ringstead with Denford, Slawston, Tachbrook and Twickenham.

He also adds that Charles is Canon of Windsor and Prebend of Lincoln.

We know, however, that Charles's life was not always an easy one and that a number of his children had predeceased him and that his faith would have been tested by his children's deaths. His infant son, Granville Leveson Proby, (his exact namesakes were 3rd and 4thEarls of Carysfoot) died on 3rd March 1811: on 12th November 1817 Charles, his second son, died in his seventeenth year; on 6th June 1818 his daughter Mary-Catherine died aged twenty; on 3rd October 1818 his daughter Susan Mary died aged twenty-three years and on 2ndFebruary 1821, his daughter Georgiana aged twenty-four also died at Ham Common. These deaths of his family in the prime of their lives, does make one wonder if there was a genetic problem, caused by the in-breeding of the aristocracy. Their effect, one young death after another, may have hastened his own end.

John Watson (c.1782 - 1851) VICAR 1822 - 1851

John Watson seems to have come from somewhat humbler roots than his predecessors. He had been born in Great Yarmouth and baptised there on 1stFebruary 1782. His patron was Thomas Burton who now lived in Great Yarmouth and it may be that the two men were linked by marriage. He was ordained as a stipendiary curate of Hemblington, a small village between Norwich and Yarmouth, on 9th July 1815. An Act had been brought in, in 1806, which allowed the Bishop to take one fifth of a non-resident incumbent's income to pay for a stipendiary curate to do the work of the parish in his absence. His annual stipend was fifty pounds. John would have been about thirty-two at this time so it may be that he had gained his Doctor of Divinity and other qualifications before this time, although he is only shown with this qualification when he is instituted, on 23rdAugust 1822, as vicar of Denford cum Ringstead. I have not yet found what he was doing in the intervening years. It is possible that he was the John Watson who married Ann Carr on 13thOctober 1808 in Great Yarmouth.

A few months after his appointment to Hemblington he was appointed as 'priest' of Acle some five miles to the east which had a:

Salary £60 & the surplice fees with the parsonage house and 6 acres of glebe land.

An advertisement in the Norfolk Chronicle shows that John was also, like many other clergymen, supplementing his income by taking in pupils to prepare them for public school but, in his case, it may be there was also instruction at a higher level, perhaps for university entrance:

Acle Parsonage 28th June 1821

The Vacation for the pupils under the tuition of
The Rev' Dr. WATSON will terminate the 22nd July
TERMS
Above 16 years of age 50 Guineas
Under do 40 do.
Entrance Two Guineas
Two Vacancies

As we have said, John then became the vicar of Denford-cum Ringstead in 1822. Thomas Symonds had vacated the curacy around the time of John Watson's arrival. He went on to become one of the domestic chaplains to the Countess of Carysfoot in 1828 and ten years later Rector of Broomswell in Suffolk and finally to Adwick-le-Street in Yorkshire. He gained this last appointment on the hunting field when he became friendly with the patron of the living, Earl Fitzwilliam, after Thomas had lent him his gloves on a cold day. Adwick le Street, north of Doncaster, was part of the Earl's Wentworth Estate. Thomas Symonds died on 23rd April 1859 aged sixty-four.

Thomas had been replaced as curate by **Benjamin Clay**. Benjamin was the second son of the Reverend Benjamin Clay, who was Rector of East Worlington in Devon. As was the almost invariable rule for Denford and Ringstead clergymen at that time he had gained his degree at St John's College, Cambridge. He was ordained as a deacon by the Bishop in Exeter Cathedral on Sunday 31st August 1817 and as a priest on 3rd September the following year. It is also worth noting that the Exeter Flying Post for 11thSeptember 1817 records that, 'Clay, Benjamin, jun., gent, East Worlington' had obtained a General Game Certificate for the year.

When he had moved to the Ringstead Vicarage we know that he kept at least one spaniel, almost certainly, as a gun dog. It is likely that his sister also lived with them. We know little about him except that at about eight o'clock one June evening in 1826 he, and his sister, decided to take the spaniel for a walk along the banks of the Nene. The dog went into the water, perhaps after ducks or moorhens and became entangled in the weeds. The story was reported almost verbatim across the local newspapers of the nation.

> *Mr. Clay fearing the animal would be drowned, requested his sister to go forward while he took off part of his clothes, and went into the river to get out the dog; she accordingly did so, but had not proceeded far before she heard a loud shriek, and in a few seconds she ascertained that her unfortunate brother (who was no swimmer) in attempting to reach the dog, had got out of his depth and sunk to the bottom. Several men were near the spot at the time; but the body was not got out for three quarters of an hour afterwards, when means were used to restore animation, but without success. The little dog, for whose sake the unfortunate gentleman thus lost his life, swam ashore without the assistance of anyone.*

Much of the story is told on a marble plaque in the Ringstead Church tower which adds:

> *And by the last act of his life gave painful proof of that kindness of heart, which had endeared him to all who knew him.*

Benjamin Clay was replaced temporarily by Thomas Woodcock Brown. Once again he had come via St John's College. His stay was brief and he went on to become vicar of Horninghold in Leicestershire. He remained in post there until his death at nearby Blaston on 24th October 1850, 'after a lingering illness borne with Christian resignation'.

It was **Charles William Chalklen** (1803 – 1846) who was Benjamin Clay's more permanent replacement. He had been born in Deptford, in 1803, and educated at St Paul's School in London. He gained an "Exhibition" of £100 for three years from the Mercers' Company who were the patrons of the school which enabled him to go to Clare College and gain his B.A. before 'migrating' to Trinity College for his Master's degree. He had been ordained as a deacon on 21st December 1826 and as a priest a year later.

His first appointment as a curate was at Higham Ferrers, on the day of his appointment as a deacon, and then as curate of Ringstead with Denford, (is the changed order of the villages significant?), on 11th August, a few months before his ordination as a priest.

Charles William Chalklen was a curate with literary aspirations and one wonders whether there was friendship and fellow feeling with the older Leonard Abington who was appointed Pastor at the local Particular Baptist Church just three years later. Both published poetry with biblical themes. Charles was a contributor to the *Westminster Review, Blackwood's Magazine and Christian Monthly Magazine.* He also had written *Babylon: A Poem* (1821), and *The Hebrew, A Sketch in the Nineteenth Century: with the Dream of Saint Kenya* which was self published just after Charles had moved to Ringstead. He had sent it to William Blackwood who had not acknowledged that he had received it. Charles wrote a letter about this to Blackwood, from Ringstead Vicarage which may show that his sister actually may have been the author, but it is unclear, and we must assume that it is his own work. Blackwood had asked a David Macbeth Moir to read it for him and perhaps it is as well that Charles did not see the review that the reader had sent the publisher. Moir wrote:

> *"The Hebrew" is characterised by that eloquence and redundant imagery so prominent in all the productions of your writer, but I am sorry to add deformed by that extravagance of tone and puerility of feeling which would to a dead certainty prevent it as a tale of human interest from ever taking hold on public attention. . . I regret much to see talent of such fine description absolutely murdered from a defect of taste - for certainly no living writer would select such subjects for embellishment as this clever but unfortunate Charles Chalklands [sic].*

He married Elizabeth Leman at Roystonh on 29th January 1831 and moved away to become the headmaster of Bletchingly Grammar School in Surrey . For whatever reason he left this post in 1832 to go to Louth and, on 21stJanuary 1834, once more became a curate, at Northborough, near Peterborough. This was to be his last appointment and the 1841 Census shows him there, aged 37 with his wife Eliza. There are also two pupils and a female servant.

It is almost certain that Charles would have known that John Clare, the "Ploughman Poet" was living at Northborough at this time. Clare had moved there from his beloved Helpston and this move had become a metaphor for his sense of a lost Eden. In 1827 Clare had published *The Shepherd's Calendar* and in 1835, a year after Charles Chalklen had arrived, Clare's *Rural Muse* collection came out. On 5th May 1837 Clare wrote from Northborough to his publisher, John Taylor, in London. He ended his brief letter:

> *The curate here draws well and has made many sketches from the poems God bless you*
>
> *Yours Ever*
>
> *John Clare*

We see that Charles Chalklen and John Clare were well acquainted and we can imagine them talking of poetry and the natural world. Charles was to see the last years of John Clare's freedom. His

mental illness was worsening and it was in 1837 that Clare entered High Beech in Epping. He "escaped" from Epping in 1841 and made the long, hard walk home but, later the same year, he was taken to the Northampton Asylum, his final home, where he died in 1864.

In early 1846 Charles went to London to see his stepmother who was dying. While there, he had a tumour removed from his head. The preface to his last book states:

> *The operation was not a dangerous one, and he was rapidly recovering from its effects; unfortunately, in his anxiety to prosecute some antiquarian researches at the British Museum, he left the house too soon: the day being damp, he took cold; erysipelas came on, and after a few days of intense suffering, on 28th of January he died.*

He was buried on 1st February in the churchyard of Islington St. Mary. He was forty-two.

The *Westminster Review* mourned his death and reported on the posthumous publishing of *Semiramis, an historical morality and other poems* in 1857 by W. Pickering. It has a mixture of the natural, the classical, the antiquarian and the religious. It was published in two volumes, the second being taken up by *Semiramis* a (probably unstageable) blank verse drama about an Assyrian Queen who, like King Arthur, had been mythologized into a fictional character. The first volume included some of his earlier poems and it may be surprising that a young clergyman should write an elegy to the notorious Lord Byron:

> ***BYRON'S DEATH.***
>
> *Many master minds with fragrant song*
> *Have chapleted thy fair front, England strong:*
> *Princely, lovely country; fear'd and loved;*
> *Full many of thy sinewy sons have moved*
>
> *The world with the firm lever of their verse.*
> *None though tower'd 'mong those Titan spirits,*
> *None 'mong those our sad land yet inherits,*
> *Mightier than he who filled this day a hearse.*

The book had been published under the patronage of the Duke of Rutland, Earl Fitzwilliam, the Bishop of Peterborough and many others. The *Westminster Review* also reported that Charles had left a ‘destitute widow’. I have tried to find out what happened to Eliza Chalklen but without success. *Semiramis* is still available as a new 'print on demand' book via the internet

We now will return to John Watson, the vicar, living in Denford under who these curates, based in Ringstead, worked. He was to remain the vicar until his death in 1851 and we know that he did live in the Denford vicarage and spent some time in the parishes. We also know, however, that he also lived elsewhere. He was appointed the vicar of Doddington in 1838 and, more significantly, the curate of St. Vedast in Foster Lane, Brompton in the district of Kensington.

These facts emerge from the death of his first wife, Ann, who died on 17th July 1832, aged forty-eight years. When we look at the *St Vedast alias Foster* Parish Burial Register we find that Ann was buried on July 20th in the Chancel. The service was conducted by John Howard Rice who was probably the husband of John's daughter, Mary Ann. All the other burials at that time, stretching from February 24th 1832 to 19th September 1833, were conducted by John Watson. There are only sixteen entries on the double page of the Register so the burials were an occasional occurrence. Ann died of cholera

which was a new disease to England and had swept through Europe from Asia. It arrived here first in Sunderland in 1831 and was probably brought to London on the colliery boats in 1831/32. *St Vedast alias Foster* was originally a Wren church standing only a few hundred yards north-east of St. Paul's Cathedral. This London cholera outbreak had a final death toll of 6,536 people. Cholera was a product of the terrible housing conditions but for many years was believed to be caused by 'miasmas' or foul air. It was only the work of John Snow, who established that it was spread by the pollution of the drinking water, and the building of an efficient sewerage system under Sir Joseph Bazalgette and others that finally eliminated the disease from Britain.

John Watson may also have been conducting some marriages there for he officiated at the marriage of his daughter Jacoba to George Horsley on November 1st of the same year as his wife's death. He was also a Lecturer at St. Mildred's in the Poultry, in the City of London, which meant that he would have been required to give some 'lectures' or sermons there.

Looking at the Registers for both Parishes we can see that in the first part of his incumbency he mainly or entirely lived away from Denford and Ringstead and his curate performed the duties of the two parishes. We know that in July 1832 his curate was **Edward Lawson Bowman**, born in Carlisle in about 1791. He had previously been at Cotterstock, north of Oundle and near Southwick Hall. He had also established the usual sideline of tutoring young men. He 'received into his House six Young Gentlemen, to educate in the usual Branches of Classical and Commercial Learning'.

Edward Bowman and his wife, Elizabeth had children before they moved to Ringstead but a daughter, Christiana, was born there in about 1834. We know that at this time that a solitary cello was used to accompany the singing in Ringstead. Could it have been one of Edward Bowman's relatives? In the first part of the century there would have been instrumental accompaniment, sometimes in a Gallery or at the back of the nave, rather than an organ, in most village churches. Thomas Hardy, in *Under the Greenwood Tree* gives a touching account of the last days of one such set of players being replaced by the organ. In many churches the old metrical psalm singing would have been the only music with sometimes the clerk reading out each line ("lining out") before it was sung. The Wesleyans introduced hymns and at first they were opposed by the Church of England as being too personal but they gradually took over and a flood of hymnals were published.

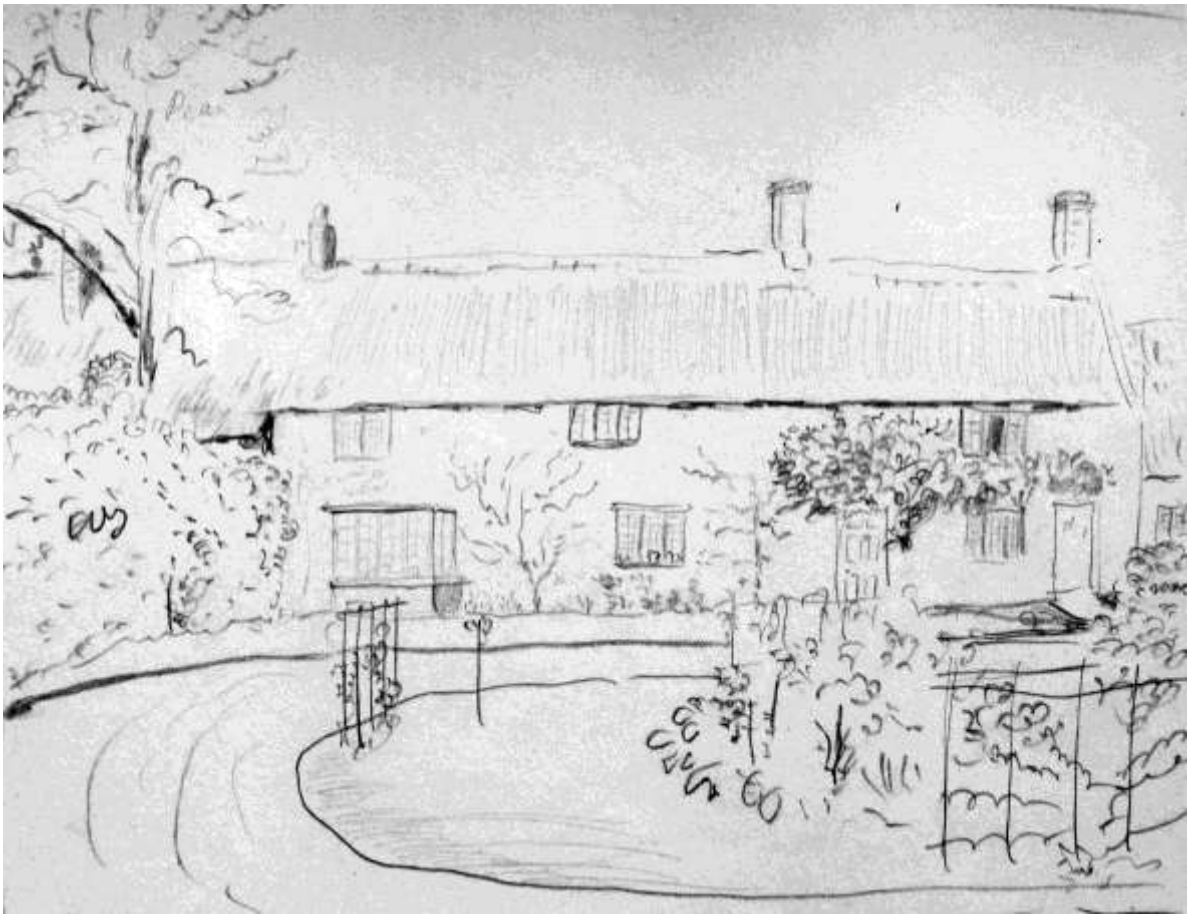
Edward Bowman moved on to become the Rector of Croglin near Carlisle where he had purchased the patronage. By 1837 he had opened a school at Seacombe in Cheshire, across the Mersey from Liverpool. On March 25th of that year he advertised in the Manchester Guardian that:

> *Young men are INSTRUCTED on the most approved systems in all the various branches of a classical and commercial education, liberally treated, so as to associate the comfort of home with scholastic pursuits, have the use of a good library, the advantage of sea bathing, and every attention paid to their morals and improvement. - Seacombe is seated on the Cheshire side of the Mersey, and is the nearest ferry from Liverpool, the steamers plying every half hour from the Prince's Dock Parade. - The situation cannot be surpassed for beauty and purity of air, and possesses every requisite the most desirable for a boarding-school establishment.*

Among the references that he quotes are the Duke of Dorset from Drayton House near Thrapston, the Rector of Woodford and John Watson.

The nineteenth century was a period of reform in the church. The tithe system was changing with a money rent replacing the old payment in kind and the Ringstead Enclosure largely separated the landowners from the villagers. Also the Nonconformists continued to attract many of the local

people away from the parish church. There was also an increasing outcry in the press about pluralism and the other uses of privilege within the Church of England. With the national secular certification of births deaths and marriages the church battled to keep its central position in the village. There is no sign of a curate in the 1841 and 1851 Ringstead Censuses and at some point Ringstead Vicarage is sold. In 1841 it appears to be lived in by Thomas Lee, the baker but this is not clear. These pressures could have forced John Watson back to his home parishes although there is no sign of him in either parish in 1841. The Parish Registers reveal to us, however that around May 1836 John, after having officiated at almost no baptisms, marriages and burials suddenly started performing at almost all of them until ill health intervened towards the end of his life.



Ringstead Vicarage June 21st 1847.

A rough sketch by George Clarke.
With the kind permission of Northampton Record Office (GCPS Bk13 p20)

The state of affairs can be seen from an incident reported across England, and the Empire, which we have described in a previous biography (Book 1) but is worth repeating briefly here. Thomas Stains had fixed a wedding day for October 12th1842 when he was to marry Mary Roberts in Ringstead Parish Church. At this time only the church had a licence for weddings in the parish. On the morning of the wedding, John Watson sent for Thomas and finding, as his parents were Baptists, that he had not been christened, and even though Mary Roberts and her family were members of the church, he refused to marry the young couple. The report continues:

> *The disappointment was great; yet as the wedding-dinner was prepared and the invited guests assembled, they kept the day as pleasantly as they could, under the circumstances.*

The young man went to Dr. Watson to have his money returned; for it seems in that parish they demand the whole of the fees when the banns are put in. "Well," said the Doctor, "If Thomas Messer (the clerk) will give you his share (half-a-crown), then I will return you my part of the fees." The honest clerk instantly refunded his portion. Stains returns to the ***poor*** *parson, saying, "I am come for my money, Sir." "What!" says he, "did Messer give you up his?" "Yes Sir,* ***he*** *behaved like a gentleman." The poor Clerical Doctor, on examining his treasury, found it reduced to a solitary half-crown. This sum he gave to Stains, with a note written by him to the clerk, begging him to pay the remaining 3s. 6d. for him. But what now was to be done? The parties must be married somehow, and that legally too; their characters were irreproachable. The whole parish cried shame on the Vicar. The Dissenters in the village, with several staunch church people, immediately raised the 3l. [£3] requisite for licensing the Baptist Meeting at Ringstead as a place for marriage, which was instantly applied for and obtained; and on the expiration of the 21 days notice required by law, Thomas Stains and Mary Roberts will be the first couple married there.*

This led to the Particular Baptist Chapel being licensed for weddings.

The Wesleyan Methodists do not appear to have ever had a burial ground in the village. We see that John becomes exasperated with the Methodists who were not baptised in the church but wanted to be buried in the churchyard. We see his comments on infant deaths in the Burial Register:

7th July 1844 Elizabeth Rawson otp aged 2 years and upwards. So called by what is termed a Wesleyan naming but not an acknowledged baptism.

There are other shorter but similar entries which continue until 1849 when we know John's sight was failing.

At this time the son of the local "gentry" gave a helping hand. Thomas Wilkins was a landed proprietor who lived in Ringstead House. He was also a local Justice of the Peace. His son, **Thomas Hodsoll Wilkins** had been born in Wisbech in 1824 and gained his B.A. at Emmanuel College, Cambridge in 1846. He was ordained a priest in 1849 and became a curate at nearby Slipton in the same year. It was also at this time that he acted as the Ringstead curate and performed some 47 baptisms, 9 weddings and 18 burials in the few years before the arrival of the new vicar. To have the son of the local "gentry" as curate may have appealed to some parishioners but others would have been grateful that the confessional box had disappeared from the Anglican Church many years earlier.

After his brief stint in Ringstead he continued at Slipton and also became the Chaplain of Thrapston Union Workhouse from 1852 until 1860. At about this time his father moved away to Leamington and Thomas became an Anglican Chaplain at Damstadt in Germany from 1861 to 1867. He may have married there before he returned home to be with his widowed, eighty-four-year-old, father in Denbury in Devon. He is now a "clergyman without care of souls". The 1871 Census shows them there with other family and servants and it is here that Thomas junior is shown as married. I have not found any sign of his wife or children but there may be good reasons for this. Crockford's last has sight of him was at Ipplepen, near Newton Abbot but he died in Kensington in 1879.

Returning to John Watson, we know that he married his second wife, Martha, before 1851 as they are together in the Denford Vicarage then but so far I have not found her maiden name or the marriage. She was born in St Marylebone, Middlesex and is some fourteen years his junior. John is now sixty-eight and there is a note at the side of his entry in the Census form which tells us that he is blind. He died on the 23rdOctober 1851 in the old Denford Vicarage.

There is a marble plaque in the Ringstead Church to John and he is buried in Denford Churchyard beneath a slab outside the Chancel window.

Thomas Burton, the patron of the living had died in Great Yarmouth in 1841 and George Capron had taken over much of his former 'manor'. The connection between the Burtons and the parishes may have been severed, at least temporarily, and, while John Watson was still living, on 7th April 1849, the *Norwich Mercury* carried the following advertisement

CHURCH PREFERMENT
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

To be Sold by Private Contract

The next presentation to the united Vicarage of Denford and Ringstead in Northamptonshire. The present incumbent is in his 67th year. The Preferment consists of the Vicarial tithes of Ringstead committed at £145 per annum, a cottage and about 84 acres of land in Denford, Ringstead and Raunds let at £77 per annum. A railway runs through the parishes and there is a station at Ringstead.

The price and further particulars apply to Messrs Fishers Lucas and Steward, Great Yarmouth.

William de Pipe Belcher (1808 - 1891) Vicar 1852 - 1854

The new vicar was William de Pipe Belcher whose name may have attracted a few jokes in the *Swan* and the *Black Horse.* He had been born in 1808 in Ashbourne in Derbyshire, the son of a vicar. His father, Paul, had been to St John' College but William went to Magdalen Hall in Oxford on 20thJune 1827. He gained his B.A, in 1832 and became a deacon in 1833 in Lichfield Cathedral. In 1835 he was made a priest at Buckden Parish Church in Huntingdonshire (Buckden Palace was until 1842 the residence of the Bishop of Lincoln) and became a stipendiary curate (filling in for a non-resident vicar) at Croft in Leicestershire. We know that he enjoyed his fishing there because in June 1848 he charged six frame-knitters from nearby Earl Shilton with using nets to take fish in Croft Brook without the permission of the owner or of William who had the fishing rights. All were fined sums ranging from four shillings to two pounds.

He was appointed to Denford cum Ringstead on the 26th January 1852. One would have thought it would be a good place for William to enjoy his sport. He had also been married, on 5thMay 1852 to Sarah Emma Allsopp, a widow, at Newton Solney, not far from Burton-on Trent.

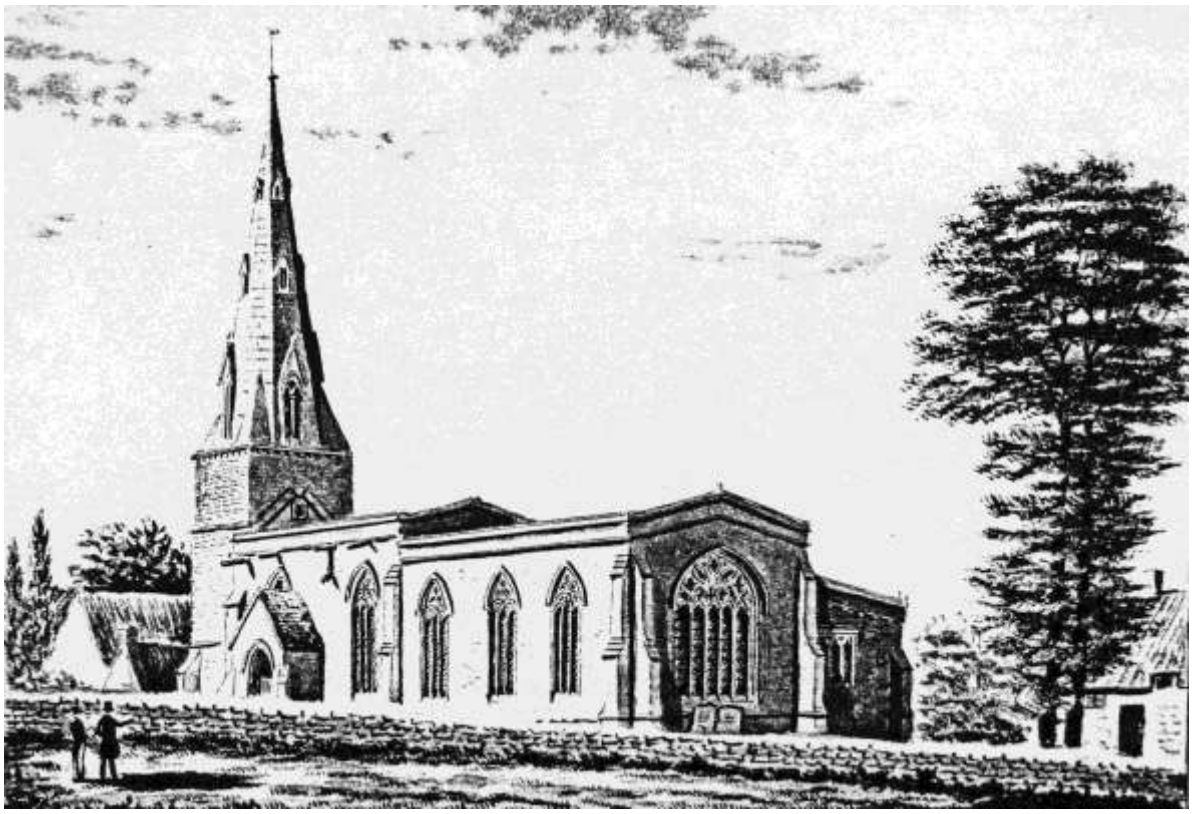
In August of that year the *Northampton Mercury* reported that:

> *The rector and parishioners of Croft, Leicestershire have presented the Rev. W. De Pipe Belcher, vicar of Denford and Ringstead, in this county, with a handsome memorial of their affection and esteem for him as their pastor over a period of fifteen years. The testimonial consists of an elegant silver inkstand, a chaste silver pocket communion service, a handsome silk gown and hood. We are informed that this is the second testimonial received by Mr. Belcher from the parishioners of Croft during his ministry among them.*

This does seem possibly a piece of news provided by William himself and if so, was he trying to impress a sceptical new congregation of his worth? Whatever the reason, his stay in Ringstead was short. He resigned and seems to have moved to South Darley in Derbyshire and then, in 1864 to the perpetual curacy of Thurlby in Lincolnshire. In the 1881 Census he was a widower living in 'The

Rookery' South Darley and was a 'clergyman without care of souls'. It looks as if he was set for a quiet retirement? Surprisingly, (and how regularly I use that word in these biographies), he married Harriett Susannah Wilton, nearly half his age, in 1882. William died in March 1891 and the Census a weeks later shows his widow living on independent means with her sisters in Cheltenham. With her is her six-year-old daughter, Pauline de Pipe Belcher, born in Darley Dale.

A curate named **J. G. Rogers** was the named minister at 10 baptisms, 9 marriages and 6 burials between 27th Match 1853 and 14th November 1854. This is almost certainly John Gurney Rogers who seems something of a mystery but whose life we can only briefly mention here. He had been born the son of a Royal Navy captain at Antron Lodge in the parish of Sithney near Helston in Cornwall and was baptised in St Allen's church on 24th May 1814. He married young, on 10th August 1831 to Frances Franklin Cove who was some three years his senior. John matriculated at Jesus College, Cambridge where he gained his B.A. in 1839 and was ordained a priest in 1841.



Ringstead Church from the south-east in 1847 by George Clarke

The church looks neat and tidy here but was soon said to be in an almost ruinous state

With the kind permission of Northamptonshire Record Office (Ref NAS 51)

By 1841 the couple are living in Dallington Vicarage in Sussex with two children and two servants. They had further children but by 1851 John is a visitor, staying with George Taylor, a farmer, and his family in Stanton in Suffolk, He is described as, "Clergyman. No care of souls". As we have seen, shortly after this he moved to the Ringstead area to act as the curate before moving to Oundle where he is lodging with a cabinet maker and upholsterer. Here, and in every subsequent Census, he is referred to a "Clergyman without care of souls". By 1871 he had moved to the Tything of Whistons near Worcester where he was in a lodging house, now with his thirty-five year-old unmarried daughter, Frances Georgiana. The 1881 Census shows the sixty-eight year old John at 17 Bridge

Street, Worcester, still with his daughter Frances. He was for a time the Chaplain of the Droitwich Union. He died at Worcester and was buried there on 3rd May 1886.

Meanwhile, his wife Frances had been an "Annuitant" with her younger children, in Chiswick in Middlesex in 1851. By 1881 she had moved to Hulme in Manchester where her married daughter, Esther Bolton and unmarried son, Charles, are shown living with her. Charles is an "Engine Fitter". She died at Chorlton-upon-Medlock in 1880.

After John and Frances parted what happened to the two of them? Did John wander, a poor clergyman, from place to place looking for work or did he have a good source of unearned income which enabled him to live his life without the necessity of work. Was Frances struggling on a small annuity, bringing up the younger children by herself or living a life of ease? We do know that by 1911 the eldest son John Antron Rogers was living in wealthy Lytham. He is now 69 years old and he describes himself as "No occupation Gentleman" and both his wife and unmarried daughter as "No occupation Lady". In 1881, aged thirty-nine he had put for his occupation "Retired shopkeeper". Obviously money had come through the generations at least to the eldest son and his wife.

What really happened must be left for someone else to tell. John Gurney Rogers, like the Baptist Minister John Collett, is one of those people who briefly left their mark on Ringstead but whose lives were largely lived elsewhere.

Alfred John Sandilands (c1803 -1862) Vicar 1854 - 1862

On 26thAugust 1854 Alfred John Sandilands was instituted as the new vicar of Denford-with-Ringstead. The newspaper notice states that it is on the presentment of Thomas Burton Esquire of Great Yarmouth but, as I have said, I am not sure if this is correct. Interestingly he was previously at St Mary's Church, Cross Green, South Darley, Derbyshire so he and William Belcher seem to have done something of a swap.

He had been a pupil at Westminster School and had then gone to Trinity College where he had gained his degree as a 'Ten Year Man', by the mere passage of time. He had been ordained and become a stipendiary curate at Haydon Bridge Chapel before moving on to a similar post at Bishopwearmouth in County Durham two years later. In the 1841 Census he is living alone in Bishopwearmouth with a female servant and a fourteen-year old boy as his man servant. In 1845 he moved to Cross Green, Darley in Derbyshire. He had spent his earlier career in mining areas and he had the confidence to take on the challenge of Denford and Ringstead. Alfred and his nephew Percival brought energy and a certain arrogance to the task.

He had married a widow, Ann Maria Leggatt, on 11thApril 1850 in Brighton and they came to Denford four years later. It is unclear how much they lived in the area because a London Directory of 1860 lists:

> *Sandilands, Rev. Alfred John, 17 Park square east, Regent's park, NW – Cross Green hall, Darley near Matlock – Woodford Cottage, Thrapstone.*

We can see that he did not live in the Denford vicarage. Nevertheless he set about his task and, in the case of Ringstead Church it was a large one. The Northampton Herald in March 1862 described the state to which it had been reduced:

The church is rapidly going to ruin. Two years since it could have been put in complete repair for about £200, but in two years hence it will require not less than £900 or £1000 to effect efficient reparation. It has been closed for some time, and the services are conducted at Denford, about one mile distant. The gates of the churchyard have had all the rails taken from them, the churchyard wall is falling into the street, and the yard itself is the resort of all the idle and mischievous urchins of the place who commit every act of violence and ill-usage on the sacred edifice. There is scarcely a whole pane of glass in the entire edifice, whilst in many places the window-frames have been taken out and flung into the interior of the church, so that the mischievously-disposed have not the least trouble in procuring admission into the body of the church and committing acts of sacrilege. The interior presents a most deplorable spectacle. The pavement is strewn with broken glass, remnants of the window-frames, stones, brickbats, dust &c. The stoves remain intact, but all the iron piping has gone. The dust-covered pulpit wears an air of utter desolation, and all round is exposed to the effects of wind and rain. The spire exhibits signs of decay, and the walls require repairs in many places.

It appears that there had been no services for some years in Ringstead Church and the village had been abandoned to the Nonconformists. This article may have been prompted by Alfred and he was aggressively trying to remedy the situation. He wrote a letter to the local newspaper and the controversy exploded onto the Letter Page of the *Northampton Mercury* as to whose fault the delay in the repairs was. First W.B Stopford replied in a letter to the *Mercury* on 10th May 1862 to which he added the correspondence between the vicar and Mr. Slater, the architect which he felt would explain the reason for the delay. These letters showed that Alfred was not prepared to let the repairs go ahead until he had seen all the plans and was happy with them.

Alfred then replied with a letter to the *Northampton Herald* on May 12th in which he states:

Sir, - As Mr. Stopford, of Drayton House, took upon himself last week to send you a copy of a letter addressed to me by Mr. Slater, the architect for the intended repairs of Ringstead Church, as well as my reply to that gentleman, I beg to enclose you my correspondence with the Bishop of Peterborough upon the subject, which will throw a different light upon the matter to that which Mr. Stopford wishes to convey in his letter to yourself of the 7th instant.

He then goes on to give the full text of his letters to the Bishop of Peterborough:

Woodford, Thrapston, April 1 1862

My Lord, - I beg to inform your lordship that, by the request of Mr. Stopford and Mr. Capron, Mr. Slater, the architect employed by them for the restoration of Ringstead Church met me and Mr. Allen, the churchwarden, yesterday, to submit his plans and to consult on the subject. After carefully examining them, as well as the specification, I felt greatly mortified and disappointed to find that so little was proposed to be done. Repairing the roof and taking down the chancel arch, together with reglazing the windows appear to be the chief part of the work, leaving the interior in its present melancholy, deplorable, and disgraceful state. I expressed to Mr. Slater my regret that he should be called upon to undertake such partial repairs, which would neither do credit to himself, nor the parties that employed him, and that I would certainly acquaint your lordship by the next post what was intended to be done, having promised you sixteen months ago that I would report from time to time what was done in the matter. I have requested Mr. Slater to forward to your lordship the pans and specification in the hope that your lordship's kind influence with Messrs. Capron and Stopford may alter their determination and cause them and their tenants to repair the church in a

more efficient and respectable manner. The specification goes no farther than to leave the church like the inside of a barn. There is not a pew fit to sit in, and the flagging throughout the church is broken to pieces. There are only two wrecks of pews in the chancel and the whole in a most dilapidated state. To make the church anything like decent, all the broken pews should be swept away, and replaced by open seats or benches. Had Messrs. Capron and Stopford followed out the plan recommended by Mr. Law the former architect they employed, I think great satisfaction would have been given, and the estimate he made would not be so much more in proportion as the present contractor, Mr. Parker, - claiming £570 for the work to be done. For myself, I would most willingly contribute handsomely if I could afford it. Having given largely to various improvements in Denford Church and the heavy expenses I have to encounter in building the house in at Denford preclude the possibility of my rendering any assistance to Ringstead Church. I should indeed hesitate to reinstate the fine organ I purchased expressly for the church until the interior was thoroughly restored. Hoping your lordship will excuse me expressing myself so strongly in the matter which I have so greatly at heart.

I have the honour to remain,
My Lord with the greatest respect,
Your Lordships' truly obliged servant,
ALFRED J. SANDILANDS.

In a second letter to the Bishop Alfred remarked tartly:

Considering Mr. Stopford receives a commuted tithe of nearly £400 a year in right of his wife, and possesses a large farm in the parish, and that Mr. Capron owns by far the greatest portion of the parish, I hope your lordship will acquiesce in my determination to oppose as far as lies in my power, anything being committed until the whole is finally arranged to be completed in a decent and becoming manner

W.B. Stopford once more replied in the *Northampton Mercury* on 20th May [mistakenly printed as March but corrected in the next issue]

Sir, - It is not my wish or intention to enter into a controversy in the newspapers respecting the lamentable state of Ringstead Church, but as the vicar, in his letter to the Bishop of the 3rdinst (published in the Herald last week), broadly insinuates that Mr. Capron, as the principal landowner in the parish, and I, as the proprietor of the great tithes, have not done as much as was our duty towards the restoration of the church, I hope that you will enclose the two letters I enclose. The first is from myself to Mr. Sandilands, dated April 1860, to which I have never received a reply: the second is a letter from me to the Archdeacon in answer to a private enquiry he had made to me as to the causes which had led to the present state of the church.

I may add that since my letter to Mr. Sandilands was written he has purchased the advowson of Ringstead and is, therefore, now patron of the living as well as the vicar.

I will not add one word to the contents of these letters, but will allow the public to form their own conclusions from them.

I remain, &c.,
W. B. STOPFORD.

The letter which he had written to Alfred was attached included the paragraph:

I will not conceal from you that we labour under very great disadvantages by the little support we receive from you. Your absence yesterday [with Mr. Capron] was most unfortunate. The parishioners imagine you are lukewarm in the matter; and the absence of any subscription on your part, however small in amount, produces a very bad effect, which we have hard work to combat in a parish composed principally of Dissenters.

I am, Rev. Sir.
W.B. STOPFORD.

The other letter was one to the Archdeacon telling him that they could not establish a Church Rate and so had tried a system of voluntary subscriptions but had only collected £120, and that the lowest estimate for repairs being £440, he and Mr. Capron had made up the shortfall in proportion to their property in the parish.

As an aside an advertisement in the Stamford Mercury for the 30th May 1860 tells of a forthcoming auction of the freehold, public houses, farms, arable and pasture lands, cottages and gardens in Denford, Thrapston and Raunds, caused by the death of Thomas Burton. Included in the sale is:

Lot 25. The Advowson or Perpetual Right of Presentation to the united Vicarage of Denford and Ringstead. This preferment consists of the Vicarial Tithes of Ringstead commuted to 145l. [£], and a Cottage and about 84 Acres of Land let for 210l. 15s. per annum. The present incumbent is in his 57th year.

Although not clear this may imply that the Vicarage house was in Ringstead. We can also infer that Edward then decided to build the new Rectory in Denford, [A Rector held the right to preferment himself and was entitled to all the tithes], and that Alfred and his family had been living at Woodford while it was being built. Unfortunately Alfred did not live to see either the renovation of Ringstead Church completed or the new Rectory (now the *Old Vicarage*) finished in 1863. He died suddenly at his home in Woodford on 22ndSeptember 1862. There is a memorial to him in the tower of Denford Church which quotes, 'the last words of his sermon spoken by him in this church twenty-six hours before his death'.

He that hath taken up the shroud and fought the good fight for a season, at the last day, when the books shall be opened, and the hearts of all men shall be known, the sword of his warfare shall be taken from him, and a crown of everlasting glory placed upon his head.

Alfred had married late (although it could have been his second marriage) and may have had no children of his own but his wife, Ann Marie had been the daughter of George Maximillian Bethune and had previously married Horatio Leggatt by whom she had had three sons and two daughters before his early death in 1838. Alfred left an estate of less than £3000 (a considerable amount of money) and among his bequests was the advowson for the parish to pass to one of his stepdaughters (probably Georgiana). The "vicarage" was offered in October 1862 with a value of £320 including the 'residence' which was obviously nearing completion.

There is one small mystery that may just be a result of not having the evidence available. In 1851 when Alfred was at South Darley with his wife Anna and daughter Georgiana there is also a twenty-nine year old "Housekeeper" called Jane L Watson who was born in Rothbury in Northumberland. In 1862 Jane, now living at Park Square in Middlesex, along with his brother, the Reverend Richard Samuel Butler Sandilands, were the Executors of his Will. They had some sort of disagreement over the wording of the bequests and Jane went to the Court of Chancery. I have not found her definitively in the next two Censuses but in 1881, aged a surprising 55, she is living at 65 Blackett Street in Newcastle upon Tyne and living "from her property and dividends". With her is her "half

sister", Georgiana Leggatt who is an "Annuitant", aged 52 and born in Crawley Sussex. Now, although there are some discrepancies, there are too many coincidences for it not to be the same two people. So who were the parents of Jane Louisa Watson? She is always spoken of as a spinster or unmarried so if this is true and Alfred was the father then she was probably illegitimate. Of course the description of Jane and Georgiana's relationship in the 1881 Census could be wrong and there may be other explanations.

Alfred came from a typical nineteenth century clergyman's family with links to the church and the landed gentry. His brother, George Percival Sandilands had died in 1836 and it was his son, who was the next incumbent under the patronage of Alfred's stepdaughter, Georgiana Leggatt.

Percival Richard Renorden Sandilands (1826 – 1890) Vicar 1863 - 1874

Percival Richard Renorden Sandilands was the eldest son of Alfred's brother. Like his uncle he seems to have been a formidable personality who achieved an amazing amount in his comparatively short stay in the joint parish.

He had attended Tonbridge School where he became head boy in 1843. He gained a Judd Exhibition Scholarship and was a Rustat. Exhibitioner at Jesus College, Cambridge. He was awarded a B.A. there in 1848 and an M.A. in 1851.

In 1849 he had been ordained as a deacon while, from 1848 to 1850 he had been an Assistant Master at Crewkerne Grammar School. He seems to have combined this work with his duties at the curate at Chaffcombe in Somerset from 1849 -50. He then moved on to become curate of nearby Seavington St. Mary from 1851-3 before becoming Classics Master at Cheltenham College, a post that he held for ten years.

It was probably the sudden death of his uncle, Alfred, that decided him to make a change from school teaching and to become the new vicar of Denford cum Ringstead. He had married Sophia Anne de Brett at Clifton in Gloucestershire on 3rdJuly 1851 where the service had been conducted by Alfred, whilst he was still the vicar of South Darley. The couple had a large family, mainly born while Percival was the Housemaster of Beaufort House in Cheltenham School.

They moved into the new Denford Vicarage and Percival began a period when the church and villages of Ringstead and Denford were transformed by his hard work. The Sandilands had a following wind for their work on the church. In 1839 Dr. John Mason Neal and Benjamin Webb had founded the *Camden* (later the *Ecclesiological) Society*. It had a journal on church architecture which promoted the returning of parish churches of a re-created medieval purity with the "Decorated Period" of Gothic Architecture being the ideal. Many new churches were built in this style and most parish churches were "restored". The old box pews, as at Ringstead, were ripped out and replaced with open pews facing the altar. Under the influence of the "High Church" Oxford Movement ritual and the altar became the focus of the church rather than the pulpit. Few churches were left untouched and then, and today, some rued the loss of much of the interior furnishings, but along with the improvements came renovation and the repair of the crumbling fabric.

Alfred would have lived to see the repair work begun. The chancel arch and part of the south wall and buttress of the chancel and north wall of the aisles were rebuilt. The tracery of the East and parts of the South windows were taken out, reset and partially restored. The roofs throughout the church were renewed with deal and were covered in lead. The clerestory windows were opened and

portions of the walls were restored and the parapet reset. Also drains were formed around the whole perimeter of the church.

Nevertheless, as Alfred had fought for, a second contract was taken out, for the full restoration of the church. The *Northampton Mercury* of 31st October 1863 listed what had been done:

> *The spire, which was in a very bad state, was taken down to the levels of the sills of the upper lights and rebuilt with a new vane executed by Mr. Potter of South Moulton-street. The tower walls were made good and underpinned and new floors of deal inserted. The septum walls of chancel and chantry, the internal stonework &c., was cleaned and restored, and the walls were replastered. The whole of the old pews and gallery were cleared away and the church has been re-seated with simple open seats of deal, the children being placed in the north chantry. The font has been replaced in its old position on a new step and the passages of the nave and aisles relaid with red and black Staffordshire tiles. There were remaining in the chancel in the chancel some of the old stall ends and fronts, these have been restored and replaced, and the new fronts &c., made to correspond with them, and of oak. The chancel has been paved with Minton's encaustic tiles in patterns. The pulpit is of stone and stands on the south-west side of the chancel arch: red stone is introduced in the shaft, angles and patterns in circles.*
>
> *The contracts for the whole of these works, including pulpit and chancel seats (the carving of which was executed by Mr. S. Poole, of London) were taken by Mr. Parker of Thrapston, and the whole of the restorations have been carried out by him from the designs of the architect, Mr. William Slater of 4, Carlton Chambers, Regent-street, London.*

It was not until October 1863 that the church was finally re-opened by Percival Sandilands at which time the Churchwarden's Minute Book indicates that the church had been closed for three years. The number of christenings and marriage ceremonies fell during those three years (burials cannot be deferred), followed by a large increase, especially in christenings of older children. Were the few ceremonies during this closure held in one of the porches?

Alfred had the last laugh, even if it was from the grave for, in the Churchwardens' Accounts we see that the initial cost of the renovations came to £1,500 and there is also notice of a £500 loan taken out on behalf of the Parishioners. It seems that the final bill was a little under £3000 instead of the £440 that W. B. Stopford originally envisaged. He had also given the new oak stalls in the Chancel as a gift to the Parish and the new pulpit was presented by a relation of Percival called French. Percival's uncle gave the Corona, font cover and service book. Percival also emphasised that the curtain, Communion Cloth, linen for the Holy Table, flagon and plate and a small harmonium were given by his friends and relatives.

The local landowners may have thought, with a sigh of relief that they had finished with this 'turbulent priest', but Percival first restored Denford Church in 1864 with a voluntary subscription of £1600 and then set his sights on educating the young people of the two parishes – and that was going to cost money!

Wooden notice in North Porch of Ringstead Church recording that a grant of £80 had been given for the reseating of the church in 1863.

It appears to be a standard notice with the local numbers inserted later. The old box pews had gone but the new open "free" pews were still "allocated", one suspects, along class lines.

Author's own photograph

We have detailed in a chapter on the schoolmasters, in Ringstead People, that Percival may have seemed to have a poor opinion of the Ringstead, 'labouring classes', but he was relentless in his pursuit of their moral and educational improvement by the provision of a 'National' (Church of England) School. In the story of the schoolmaster we told of the two reasons that Percival cited for the need for a school:

1 *The extreme ignorance and low moral tone of the population, particularly of the inhabitants of Ringstead.*

2 *The absence of any resident Gentry to exert a healthy influence on the lower orders.*

We can see this as a slur on the Ringstead working people but we can see now that it was also a criticism of 'Lord of the Manor' and landowners who were not resident.

He did not believe in the provision of a one education system for all and he continued to advertise for six pupils to be prepared for the public schools by him, aided by the **Reverend E. Kitson**, a 'Double Honour Man and Bell University Scholar'. Edward Bredin Blake Kitson was born in Malta on the 9th June 1842, the son of Ann Jane and the Reverend Edward Kitson. His father, a Royal Navy chaplain, had gone to Malta on *HMS Princess Charlotte* and had married there to Ann, on 30th March 1841. She was the daughter of Colonel Bredin and had been born in Portugal. After service abroad, his father had become the chaplain of the Royal Greenwich Hospital and Edward is with his parents in Greenwich in the 1851 and 1861 Censuses although by the latter one he was a student at Christ's College, Cambridge.

In August 1866 he was appointed to the Curacy of Denford-cum-Ringstead where he assisted Percival in the work of the parishes as well as his teaching. By 1871 he had left the post and had followed his father to become a "Chaplain to Her Majesty's Forces" based at the Herbert Hospital, Shooter's Hill, Kidbrooke and is living there with his unmarried sister Francis and his younger brother Thomas. This hospital was the first purpose-built to reflect the beliefs of Florence Nightingale (the architect was her nephew) with wards at right angles to a main corridor to maximise fresh air and daylight. Of course Florence still believed in the passage of diseases by miasmas or foul air. Edward was posted to Canada and on 4th November 1875 he married Katherine Ann Allison from St John's, New Brunswick. The wedding was at Halifax, Nova Scotia. The couple did not have any children and after returning home Edward worked first at Aldershot before becoming the vicar of Northaw near Potters Bar in Middlesex. He died, aged seventy-six in 1918.

After Edward Kitson had left, Percival advertised, in 1870, for just two pupils to be educated alongside his own sons

Nevertheless he was determined to give the children of working people in the parishes a proper education and he harangued and pleaded with all the local landowners so that, in spite of the costs borne by many of them in the recent renovation of the two churches, they subscribed again at a rate, according to their Poor Rate contributions. George Capron gave £50 and the Reverend G. Capron £75; W.B. Stopford also gave £50 and the Trustees of Ringstead Charity, £47; and so on down to Miss Beeby who gave £1. Percival was willing to practise what he preached and gave £70. It must also be remembered that George Capron gave the land on a lease so long that it was the same as freehold.

We will not go over the details of the building of the school which was covered in the previous book or the celebration of its opening in a chilly, if renovated, church on 13thNovember 1867. Percival Sandilands was a tireless worker who had given time and money to the erection of the school. He was also a stickler for discipline. At the Northampton Assizes, a Charles Blencowe was brought to court for 'embezzling suet' from him on 2nd January 1869. Charles was acquitted.

It was found that the children from Denford, especially the infants, tended to forego the slog up the hill and then down again into Ringstead when the weather was bad. Percival set about overseeing the building of an Infants School in Denford which opened in 1872.

Percival had also taken time to inspect Wellingborough Upper Grammar School in June 1868. The results were announced at a Prize Day and the class-stratified education that was envisaged was made clear by the speeches. First, the headmaster, the Reverend T. Auden, opened with a few remarks on the objects of the school:

> *To make the school as useful as it could be made for the town and neighbourhood – to make it, in fact, what the "Schools' Inquiry Blue Book" defined as a school of the 2nd class – that is, one which should afford a sound and useful education for the sons of professional men, farmers and upper trades-people.*

Percival then detailed his favourable 'examination' of the school and stated that:

> *He felt, in fact that this grammar school offered a complete solution of that problem about which so much had been said and written, and for which new schools had often been thought necessary, viz., the providing an education of immediate utility for boys intended soon to enter business or agriculture without, at the same time, neglecting the classics, which formed the best basis of education.*

All this work was done while Percival obviously continued with the sports of a country gentleman. The *Northampton Mercury* on the 8th January 1870 reported that:

> *We regret to hear that a very serious accident occurred on the 1st instant to the Rev. Percival Sandilands incumbent of the parishes of Denford cum Ringstead near Thrapston. It appeared that the rev. Gentleman was engaged in hunting, and that whilst following the hounds near the village of Coppingford, his horse slipped after a leap and fell over its rider, breaking his arm in two places, and inflicting injury upon the spinal column near its junction with the head. He was removed to a house nearby, and although for some time he was considered to be in a precarious condition, it is now hoped that, with due care, recovery will ensue.*

He had taken the baton from his Uncle and accelerated. During this time he had also taken on the post of Chaplain to the Thrapston Union Workhouse, a post that he held from 1866 until 1870. His work done, he moved on to become the vicar of Chudleigh Knighton in 1875. He still retained his interest in school and discipline. Besides being the perpetual curate at Chudleigh Knighton he ran a small private school at his house, called *Lyveden,* in Wolborough, Newton Abbot. He wrote from there to a friend on 26th September 1874:

> *I must not continue a member of the Northamptonshire Architectural Society though if I live and prosper three or four years longer I shall try to get back to the Diocese but away from the banks of the Nene.*

His school had, in 1881, fourteen boarders, aged between 9 and 13 years. There was a staff, besides Percival, of: Tutor, Matron, Cook and three maids. On 12th July 1883, the *Exeter Gazette* reported that Percival, acting in his capacity as a school manager, was charged with ill-treating a schoolboy, eight years old, who was causing a schoolmistress some trouble. He was found not guilty but the report felt that as a clergyman he should not lay himself “open the accusations of malicious parties”. It seems from the report that this is at the Chudleigh Church of England School rather than his own private school. For whatever reason, Percival’s school ran into financial difficulties and the *London Gazette* of March 4th listed him as those seeking a first meeting, “in the matter of liquidation by arrangement or composition” with his creditors under the 1869 Bankruptcy Act. Perhaps it was at this time that the right to preferment of the Denford and Ringstead joint vicarage was sold.

It seems that Percival’ private school had not prospered and he died on 6thOctober 1890 in Chudleigh Knighton. Whatever his faults the people of Ringstead and Denford had much to be grateful to him for his tireless work.

As an aside it is interesting to note, particularly in view of his successor’s son’s cricketing prowess that Percival and his wife had a son and daughter born at Denford besides older ones born elsewhere. The boy was Rupert Renorden Sandilands who played football for Old Westminsters and between the 5th March 1892 and 16th March 1896 also played five times for England at outside left, scoring three goals. Rupert, described as the "brilliant Old Westminster sprinter", who was on the staff of the Bank of England, played in a match against Wales on 18th March 1895. It was watched by 13,000 fans at Queen's Club in West Kensington. He scored a goal in the 74th minute which secured a draw for England. This was a historic match for it was the last time that England fielded an all amateur side. The Football Association had legalised professionalism in 1885 and now it began to take over the national side.

Rupert Renorden Sandilands

© Getty Images

Edward Sandford (1818 - 1879) Vicar 1874 - 1879

After the frantic time of the Sandilands the new incumbent put his energies into managing the schools and churches as they settle in. He was the son of the Reverend Humphrey Sandford and was born in 1818 in Shrewsbury, in the county of Shropshire where the family had been “since the Conquest”.

He had been educated at Shrewsbury School and St John's College, Cambridge, and had originally been intended for the legal profession. The 1841 Census finds him, aged 20 years old, as an “Attorney” lodging with a cabinet maker and his wife at 8 Lower Wharton Street in Clerkenwell. It appears that he was a solicitor of the Court of Chancery and an attorney of the Court of the Queen's

Bench but he decided that the legal profession was not for him and he became a student at St Bees Theological College. St Bees was a coastal village in Cumberland and the College was established in 1816 and took in its first students a year later. It was the first Theological College opened by the Church of England and was established by Bishop Law who needed clergymen for the exploding population of industrial Lancashire. What had been a ruined Abbey was repaired and rebuilt to become the college buildings with the local vicar acting as the Principal. Prior to this all curates had all been from Oxbridge or, occasionally, had been privately educated by a clergyman. St Bees was also a milestone in the introduction to the clergy of young men from the professional and middle classes rather than the gentry. The students lodged in private houses in the village and its intention was to "supply a good and economical education for candidates for Holy Orders". It concentrated on producing good parish priests rather than bishops. Soon other colleges, attached to universities, emerged and in 1895 St Bees closed.

Edward was ordained as a curate at Trinity Church, Coleham, Shrewsbury. In 1847 he moved to a tougher area when he became the curate of St John the Baptist, the parish church of Halifax. On 20th September 1848 he married Mary, the daughter of Joseph Armitage Esq. of Milnsbridge House, Huddersfield. He was briefly the vicar at the family living of Bicton but moved on to Elland, south of Halifax in 1853 as the perpetual curate and, later, Rector.

It was at Elland that he had his most obvious achievements of his career and perhaps where his heart seemed to remain. The church had many alterations, the Rectory House was built, Greetland Church erected, the National Schools enlarged and the cemetery consecrated. Elland was a small industrial town, originally based on the woollen cloth trade, but also with other small manufacturing industries, using first the canal and then the railway.

With middle age, Edward decided, in 1872, to move to the more comfortable parish of Grandborough, near Rugby, in Warwickshire but he did not settle and moved to Denford with Ringstead in July 1874. We know that Edward and his son Edward Armitage Sandford took and almost daily interest in the new school at Ringstead, checking on the children's progress and giving regular religious instruction. There are also records in the School Log Book of his wife and daughter visiting the school to inspect the needlework. The school helped to bring the whole of the vicar's families into the community.

His time in the joint parishes was not to be long for, after a period of very severe weather, he died in Denford Vicarage on 18thDecember 1879, aged 61 years. He was buried in the family vault in Elland churchyard. A muffled peal of bells was rung at Ringstead on the evening of his funeral.

There are no entries in the Ringstead Burial Register in the last six months of Edward's life but that does not mean that there was no work for the grave digger in the churchyard. This surprising fact is brought to light by an article in the *Northampton Mercury* of 9th August 1879 written, it seems, by the Ringstead Church Weathercock. From its lofty perch the Weathercock writes to the newspaper:

Ringstead Weathercock 2012
Authors own photograph

While taking an outlook on Tuesday evening, I saw what turned out to be a funeral procession, wending its way to a spot at the base of my support in God's Acre. It is not the first procession by many that I have witnessed, but, generally, I am accustomed to see an official in white, and to hear him repeat, for the consolation of the mourners, a form of service rich in comfort. This time I looked in vain for the white-robed comforter, and I ascertained that his services had not been requested, as the bereaved friends belonged to the uncompromising Baptist persuasion. The body, that of a young man of 21, and unbaptised, was lowered into the grave right beneath my eye, and though, unless my sight deceived me, I saw the resident Baptist minister of the village present, not a word was said. When I first saw this minister I concluded that he was going to hold a service, and yet he did not begin. I thought if he were the minister of a Gospel worthy of the name, surely this was the time for him to address some of its consolations to the sorrowing company around the grave, but, to my surprise, from first to last, he was as one dumb. I could not understand such conduct, and wondered why the silence was maintained. But after the mourners had departed a strange sort of explanation was given. I was told that the law would not allow any other than the comforter in white to dispense consolation to mourners within the sacred enclosure, though they call it God's Acre, and that the Baptist minister did not speak because the law would not let him. I was curious to know

> *what law! All I could ascertain was, that it was not the law of God, nor of His Gospel but some misconceived or misconstrued Parliamentary enactment. When I hear this I wished my voice was as good as that of the ancient cock in Scripture for then I would have administered a rebuke to Englishmen as telling as that which caused St. Peter to weep so bitterly. I had heard that civilisation had been making rapid strides of late, that the people had become very enlightened and that the Victorian era eclipsed all its predecessors, but such scenes as these, which I hear are of frequent occurrence in the country, make me doubt whether civilisation has advanced much since the stones which support me were first laid; and I have been wondering whether silent funeral are necessary to the safety of the church for, if they are, I shall soon wish that I could* spread my wings and fly away from a church needing such heartless safeguards as these.

This was a common practice and the weathercock would not have been disturbed by the tolling of the funeral knell for bells were also not allowed for Nonconformist burials in the churchyard. I do think, however that the burial would usually have been entered in the Register and it may be that Edward was ill and this was an oversight.

The name of the dead man was Thomas Ralph Mayes who was the son of Daniel and Charlotte Mayes. Thomas, a young shoemaker, had died at home on 4th August of Typhoid Fever. Typhoid was a major cause of death during the century. Public Health Acts of 1873 and 1875 had established Rural Sanitary Authorities which were based on the Poor Law Districts. In March 1890, the Medical Officer, Mr. L.B. Calcot reported:

> *Ringstead. – One death from typhoid fever. The wells are very shallow and liable to contamination by cesspits which should be abolished and re-constructed with earth closets. Pumps have been recommended to the dip wells and two wells were condemned and closed.*

As we would expect, Thomas Mayes does not appear in the Ringstead Baptisms Register but it may be something of a surprise to discover that, although buried in the churchyard, his name is not in the Burial Register. How many others went unrecorded? Of course the *Northampton Mercury* supported the Nonconformist cause and one wonders if the "Weathercock" was a staff reporter. The Baptist Burial Ground was still in use but there are very few burials recorded in the decades before its final closure and it may be that there were only a few reserved places left at this time.

Edward Armitage Sandford (c1852 - 1921) Vicar 1880 - 1885

Edward Armitage Sandford was probably the second son of Edward and Mary (née Armitage). It is difficult to be certain about the children of the lesser gentry without sight of the Parish Registers because, in the boys' cases, they are rarely at home after infancy. He was born in the Isle of Up Rossall, Bicton, near Shrewsbury in 1851 and by 1861 Edward, aged 9 and his younger brother, Henry Rossall Sandford, are at a small prep school in Lytham St Annes in Lancashire. Ten years later and Henry is 18 and at Clifton School, near York, and Edward is 19 and finishing his time at Shrewsbury School.

We know that Edward was a keen cricketer, although the two sets of statistics that I have found on the internet may not do him justice. He played in a two-day match for Shrewsbury School against Malvern College on the 27th and 28th June 1871. Edward was bowled for 6 in his first innings and 8 in his second. He bowled one over in Malvern's first innings and four overs for 3 runs in their second. He had an even greater honour later, in a three-day match, on the 6th – 8thJune 1878, for Elland, his father's parish, against the touring Australians. The Australians fielded 11 players and Elland 18, but

even so the home side could only muster 29 runs, to which total Edward, coming in sixteenth, added nothing, (it was a popular score). The Australian, Boyle, took seven wickets in two overs with Edward being part of a hat trick. In the match Boyle took 11 wickets but his colleague Spofforth took 16: figures that are unlikely to be repeated. In the second innings Edward scored one run out of 66, and he did not bowl in the match. The Australians only managed 90 and 85 although, with eighteen fielders, fours must have been difficult to come by. It would have been a great honour for Edward to play but perhaps he would have preferred the details to have disappeared by now.

After Shrewsbury School he had matriculated at Christchurch College, Oxford on the 14th October 1871, aged twenty. He gained his B.A. four years later and his M.A., in 1881, after his clerical career was well under way. He had been ordained by the Lord Bishop of Ripon in the Cathedral Church on 14th March 1876 as a deacon at Rastrick of *Brighouse and Rastrick Brass Band* fame.

After his father's death in December 1879 Edward Armitage Sandford took over both the vicarage at Denford cum Ringstead. The 1885 Crockford Directory tells us that the living had 75 acres of glebe land and there was a gross income of £350 and a house. One of his earliest duties was to perform a double "fashionable marriage" for the Dearlove sisters in Ringstead Church, not something that was a regular occurrence. The *Northampton Mercury* of the 14th August 1880 described the scene:

> *The young ladies are both daughters of the late Mr. Joseph Dearlove, of Ringstead House. The family have so long resided in the village, and have been so generally respected and esteemed, that everyone was anxious to vie with each other in manifestations of goodwill and congratulations. Quite early in the morning arches of evergreens and flowers were erected over the gateways to Ringstead House and churchyard. . . .*
>
> *As the bridal party left the church, flowers were strewn in the path and quantities of rice thrown over them. After the wedding dejeuner, the newly-married couples went amid hearty demonstrations and the enlivening strains of the Ringstead band to the station, en route for Blackpool and Scarborough.*

It was during Edward Armitage Sandford's time that the Ringstead churchyard was declared full and unusable. There were some Ringstead people buried in Denford churchyard but there was an outcry and a new "secular" Cemetery was opened a little further out of the village. The first person to be buried was Thomas Stains on the 14th March 1881. Nearly forty years earlier he was the young man who had been refused a marriage ceremony because, as a Baptist, he had not been christened by the church. This was still a problem and Edward did not sign the Burial Register and "Unbaptized" was written in that column, seemingly by another, shaky, hand.

Edward married Mira Isabella Rodwell on January 3rd 1882, at High Laver in Essex, where her father was the Rector, and the couple settled in the Vicarage in Denford.

We saw in the chapter on schoolmasters in *Ringstead People* how both Edward and his father took a keen daily interest in Ringstead School. The times were changing and the schools also brought the vicar in greater contact with the children and the families of the village. On 9th March 1881, for example, he is part of an "entertainment" that the choir and church members gave in the schoolroom. There were songs by Edward and his sister as well as by the headmaster John Bannister, and his wife. He was also, not surprisingly, the captain of the new Ringstead Cricket Club and, in 1882, presided over their first annual meeting when John Bannister was presented with a "purse" of £8 3s. 6d. collected by the members of the club and friends, as "a small token of their esteem, and as an expression of their sympathy with him in the serious loss [of an eye] that he had sustained by an

accident in the cricket field on September 13th". The cricket pitch might be as dangerous as the hunting field but it was played with local people from many backgrounds.

There was still much animosity in the area between the Nonconformists and the Church of England which would erupt near the end of the century over the religious service in the school at the start of the day and we get a hint of it in a report of a meeting of the Bible Society which Edward attended on 20th May 1882.

> *The attendance, although not large, was larger than the previous year, and, considering the malevolent opposition the society had to encounter in the town and neighbourhood, it is satisfactory to find that it holds its own amidst such conflicting elements.*

Edward also had encouraged the local bellringers and had asked in 1884 that seven of them from Ringstead should be admitted into the *Raunds, Wellingborough and District Society of Church Bellringers.*

The Church of England has been described as the "Conservative Party at prayer", so it is no surprise to find Edward and many of the local clergymen at a banquet on 30th December 1885, given by the party to celebrate Lord Burghley's return to Parliament at the last election.

Edward Armitage Sandford was not to stay long in Denford and Ringstead but as patron of the living, appointed the Reverend William Oram Leadbitter to succeed him in January 1886. He had many years left to live and at first he seems to have taken a "sabbatical" for in 1891 he and Mira, his wife, at living at Avon Lodge in Malmesbury in Wiltshire. He became the curate of the parish in 1890 but describes himself in the Census as "late vicar": he is only thirty-nine years old.

He is recorded as the curate of Henbury in 1892 but by 1901 he is living in Bath and is now a clergyman with two female servants to look after him. His wife, meanwhile, is a visitor living on her own means at No. 1 Marlborough Place in Sidmouth. It may be she was "taking the cure" for in 1909 she dies and in 1911 Edward is at Pembroke House, 18 Hallam Road, Clevedon in Somerset. It appears that he remarried to Margaret C Teuton (or Teulon) in 1913 at Long Ashton in Somerset and it was there that he died in 1921, aged sixty-nine.

William Oram Leadbitter (1861 - 1920) Vicar 1886 - 1894

William Leadbitter came from a very different background than all the previous curates and vicars of the joint parishes and as a result we find him with his parents through his childhood years. He was born a month before the 1861 Census, the son of George Leadbitter and his wife, Margaret. George is a "house and commission agent" aged twenty-four and the family are living at 7 Pearson's Yard in Newcastle upon Tyne. Lodging with them is Isaac Patterson, aged eighteen, who is a Joiner and Cabinet-maker. Around them is a mixture of craftsmen and labourers, a number born in Ireland.

By 1871, George is an accountant living with Margaret and their three children at West Kyo in County Durham. It appears that his first wife, Margaret, died in 1863 and he married Mary McGuire in 1864 so she is William's stepmother. Another ten years and George is still an accountant, living next door to the Miners Arms in Kylance Head in Tanfield. Most of his neighbours are coalminers. All the couple's children seem to have been encouraged to look to the professions for work. William is not at home but his brother, James, at sixteen, is a law student and we know that thirteen-year-old George goes on to become a teacher.

I have not been able to find William in the 1881 Census he was almost certainly at University College, Durham, studying for his degree. On 6th June 1885 he was ordained as a deacon at Peterborough Cathedral, and, at the same ceremony, as a licensed curate at St Marks in Peterborough.

Confusingly, he was already acting as a curate in Finedon on 16thNovember 1884. We know this because he had been preaching at Islip and, on his way back to Finedon, disaster struck. The *Northampton Mercury* reported that he:

> *. . . returned home in a pony and trap, in company with Mr. W. Turner, who was driving. On ascending the hill near Finedon Poplars they were run into with great force by a trap, containing about half a dozen persons, coming in an opposite direction. Both Mr. Leadbitter and Mr. Turner were very violently thrown out of the trap, Mr. Leadbitter being injured on the head and various parts of the body. Mr. Turner was injured in the arm. The shaft of the trap was broken off and the harness damaged, but the pony was apparently unhurt. The pony and trap belonged to Mr. Thomas Leach of the Bell Inn. The occupants of the other trap, we understand hailed from Woodford and were returning home. Several of them were thrown out, and one, a woman complained of being hurt.*

The report clearly shows who it considered was at fault and where one's sympathies should lie.

In January 1886 he became the Vicar of Denford and Ringstead with Edward Armitage Sandford still the patron of the living. While at Finedon he had obviously noticed Lillian Gertrude, the young daughter of the vicar, George Paul for they were married in 1887

William was a different kind of minister than the rather patrician ones that had preceded him. He was not connected to the landed gentry but that does not mean that he was always welcomed by all the people of the two villages.

We see hints of William's different approach in the brief articles that appeared in the *Northampton Mercury.* On 19thJune 1887 there was a flower service and "an appropriate sermon" was preached by William to the children. In January of the following year there was a "Grand Concert" featuring Ringstead Brass band and comic and sentimental songs. William "presided" over the show and the proceeds of "over £2" were to be devoted to "the purchase of a magic lantern [early type of projector] for the new Working-men's Guild". A little over a year later, the *Mercury* reported that in Denford:

> *The Rev. W. O. Leadbitter has this week opened a new reading-room at the Vicarage free of charge, for men for each Wednesday evening. Newspapers and games will be provided, and smoking will be allowed.*

At the same time, however, he began to upset some of the middle classes on whom his position in the community still largely depended. He accused Mr. Bird, the Medical Officer of the Thrapston Union of neglecting his duty. His complaint was heard by the Board of Guardians and dismissed. William was not cowed and wrote again to the Board of Guardians giving a detailed account of how Susan Gunn, who Mr. Bird claimed to have visited, had not in fact been visited. He also claimed:

> *. . . Indeed, so poor has been the treatment which the woman [Susan Gunn] has received that she has been compelled to go as an out-patient to the Northampton General Infirmary. She has been an out-patient since April 7th and although she has a certificate from the Infirmary doctor to say that she is unable to work, she is, by the petty spite of the Union doctor, prevented from receiving the extra sick allowance granted by the Guardians.*

The Board agreed that William did not understand the duties of a medical officer and Mr Peach believed that Susan Gunn was a “bad woman” to let Mr. Leadbitter act as he had. We need not judge who was right or wrong but we can see that William was trying to defend his poor parishioners even if it brought him in conflict with the authorities.

Throughout the century there was a clear identification of the Church of England with the Tory Party and the Nonconformists with the Whigs and, later, the Independent Labour Party. Affluence, however, was beginning to blur the edges and this could lead to increased animosity. J. R. Wilkinson, preaching at the opening of the new Ringstead Baptist Sunday Schools in 1887, stated:

> *It is a matter of regret that the descendants of many wealthy Nonconformists left them because society gives them the cold shoulder unless they attend church. We respect persons who honestly differ from us, but we despise those who have not the manliness to remain members of the humble Congregational or Baptist churches, and become Churchmen as a short cut to gentility.*

This was summed up by the saying that, "a carriage never goes to a meeting house for three generations".

It was at this time, in June 1889, that William’s brother, George, was drowned. He had become an assistant master at Exmouth House in Devonport. With some friend he had hired a boat and gone to Barnpool. George had dived off the boat and swum towards the shore. Suddenly he had disappeared and after a frantic search his body was found face downwards in six feet of water. It was assumed by the way he was curled up that he had been seized with a sudden attack of cramp.

We saw in an earlier episode that William had hired a horse and trap to get around his work. It may be that he also used the bicycle to get around his parishes. Perhaps we can deduce this from an article that was published in the *Northampton Mercury* which listed new inventions that had been recently patented. Included in the list was:

> *An adjustable revolving bicycle jack and stand – W.O. Leadbitter, Denford Vicarage, Thrapston, Northampton.*

The 1891 Census finds William and Lillian and their young family at the Denford Vicarage. With them is a daughter Margaret aged two and a baby son (later named Geoffrey) just one day old. There is, however, plenty of help at hand for Lillian’s sister is staying with them and there is also a nurse and three female servants. A sixteen-year-old young man is also there who is a “cow boy” so presumably William kept some cows on the glebe land.

It was in April 1892 that William received his worst publicity when under a heading, “A Perverse Parson”, the *Mercury* published the following brief report.

> *The annual vestry meeting was held in the Schoolroom on Monday morning. The usual time was at five in the afternoon, but at the last vestry meeting a resolution was passed unanimously that seven o’clock in the evening would be a more favourable time for working men to attend. The chairman was instructed to notify the same to the vicar, the Rev. W.O. Leadbitter, who instead of complying with the very reasonable wish of the vestry, called the meeting at ten in the morning. When questioned as to his proceeding his replay was that he had a perfect right to call it when he thought well, and refused to put it to the meeting for an adjournment. Ultimately the proposer, the Rev. R.A. Selby put it to the meeting himself and it*

was carried by about 40 to 6. The 40 then left the meeting, the vicar and a certain local preacher giving them a hearty clap of the hands.

When we consider William's defence of a poor woman his behaviour here seems a little odd. If we discover that the Reverend Selby was the local Baptist Minister we realize that this was part of a sectarian power struggle centred particularly on the school. There had also been anger at the way that the charity allotments had been run and a Vestry Meeting three years earlier, in 1889, had been the potential focus of this dissatisfaction. There had been an unusually large attendance but the meeting had passed off without incident. Nevertheless, whatever the history, William does not seem to have handled the situation well.

We see through the second half of the nineteenth century that the Vestry and Parish Meetings became a place where the increasing franchise coupled with the larger number of duties being delegated to it caused constant friction. The parish constables are still elected annually but we also see discussion about the state of the footpaths, the lighting of the streets and the collection of sewage and the burial of the dead. The vicar still often chaired the meetings but others also took this role and in 1894 the Local Government Act created new, secular, Parish Councils take over most of these duties.

In 1890 William had proposed, it appears unsuccessfully, that the Parish did not adopt the 1833 Lighting Act. Nevertheless the new Parish Council adopted the Lighting and Watching Act on 24th January 1895. We may look at the Vestry meetings at another time but it is enough to say here that we see an increasingly political and secularised view on parish matters as the new electors began to exert their influence.

William had another difficult situation to deal with at Ringstead School when the long serving John Bannister was replaced by Albert Crew as headmaster. The first chaotic five months of 1893 have been detailed in the story of the schoolmasters in *Ringstead People* but it involved William in meetings and letter writing and much local animosity

In the following year William Oram Leadbitter moved on from Ringstead. The report in the *Mercury* of his leaving shows a rather patronising attitude to him but also reveals a certain respect:

A good many people in East and North Northamptonshire will be pleased to hear of the preferment of the Rev. W.O. Leadbitter, vicar of Denford cum Ringstead to the important parish of St. Luke's, Leicester. Whilst at Finedon as curate (where he married a daughter of the Rev. G.W. Paul and sister of Mr. Herbert Paul, M.P.), he gained many friends, and in the quiet Denford district he was highly esteemed for his energetic work for his Church, although his zeal in that direction has sometimes brought him into collision with a section of the parishioners. A good preacher and an energetic worker, his proper sphere is in a town parish, where there is room for his energies; and I shall expect to hear a good report of his labours in Leicester.

That many people in Denford and Ringstead had a respect for William, and that he had an affection for them can be seen by the fact that still, in 1900, he came back to preach at the harvest festival service. Also there is a grave in Denford Churchyard for William's father, George who died on 29th September 1897 and perhaps had come to stay with him in his old age. The grave also remembers his brother George who was drowned in 1889.

William remained as vicar of St Luke's before, in 1906, he became the vicar of West Walton, north of Wisbech in the Norfolk fens. His daughter Margaret married an important Hebrew scholar called

Alfred Guillaume. His son, Geoffrey was killed at Gaza in the First World War and is commemorated on the war memorial there. William died a few years later on 2nd June 1920. He left £1946 12s. 7d. to his widow, Lilian.

Andrew Cavendish Neely (1860 - 1937) Vicar 1894 - 1898

Andrew Cavendish Neely who became the vicar after William was once again someone whose roots led back to the Anglo-Irish landed gentry. His father, also Andrew, had been born in Ireland in 1809. He married late and Andrew was his fourth child. Andrew senior had become the vicar of Ashton in Northamptonshire in 1853 but before that had run, with his brother, Lisburn Academy, a private school in the north of Ireland.

All the children were born in Ashton and Andrew Cavendish Neely was christened there on 14th October 1860 and spent his early childhood at the Rectory. The 1881 Census records him, aged 20, at the Rectory but notes that he is "an undergraduate – was Oxford". It seems that he transferred to London for when he is ordained as a deacon in December 1883 it states that he has come from London University. He became a curate of Market Harborough (1883-4) and then St Saviour, Leicester (1884-6). He was appointed his father's curate at Ashton from 1887 to 1894, possibly as he was getting too old to run his parish by himself, and combined this with being curate-in-chief with Hartwell from 1891 to 1893.

It was in November 1894 that he was appointed the vicar of Denford cum Ringstead, now under the patronage of Mr. S. G. Stopford-Sackville. His father came to live with him in at Denford when he resigned as vicar of Ashton in 1895. It seems likely that his two older, spinster sisters, Agnes and Julia, also came to stay with Andrew for the 1901 Census has them with him after he had moved on to Islip.

The vicar kept up the visiting and management of the Ringstead and Denford Schools. On July 23rd 1897 Andrew commented unfavourably on the work of Miss Standen and Miss March, the two assistant mistresses which seemed to lead to both leaving the school within the month. On March 31st 1898, he wrote in a letter to Mr Capron at Southwick Hall, mainly trying to get a subscription towards oak benches and book desks for the choirboys in the Chancel, to harmonize with the men's seats at a cost of £7 12s 0d. He also wrote:

> *I also hope the school may be maintained as Voluntary School. I hear, however, that the New Code is likely to make the carrying on of Voluntary Schools more difficult than ever.*

Those last four words emphasise the extra workload, as well as opportunities that the schools placed on the vicars and sometimes the strain showed. How did the Vicars cope with the two churches' services each Sunday? A Preachers' Book has survived which notes the services (and texts) as well as the collection totals from 1886 until 1907. We see that the general pattern seems to have been:

> *10.30 am Matins and sermon*
> *6.00 pm Evensong and sermon*
>
> ***and the following week**:*
>
> *8.00 am Holy Communion*
> *2.30 pm Evensong and sermon*

We cannot be sure but it may be that the reason for this fortnightly pattern was that the reverse pattern was happening in Denford Church, allowing the Vicar to be at all the four services. There were some guest preachers and other variations and Andrew Neely also introduced a Litany on Friday mornings.

Andrew Neely's time at Denford and Ringstead was not long but the independent shoemakers of the area seem to have made a deep impression on him that he carried with him for the rest of his life. In 1929 the *Northampton County Magazine* published a poem written by him about a supposed meeting in a railway carriage and a shoemaker's "shop" between an undercover reporter and a Ringstead shoemaker. It is set in 1896 but it is not clear exactly when the poem was written:

> *Of course you've heard of Ringstead in the valley of the Nene?*
> *Well that's the place I come from, where nearly all the men*
> *Their wives and boys and girls as well, are employed in making shoes,*
> *Yes! I thought you'd know about it; most folks do, but they confuse*
> *Our work with other sorts, you know, that's done in our towns*
> *Like Leicester and Northampton where they call us rustic "clowns".*
> *Those folks can't make shoes sir – not as I want to boast*
> *But they know no more of shoe work than they know the coast*
> *Of the South Pacific Ocean or of China or Japan;*
> *They can't make shoes from start to finish; us chaps at Ringstead can!*
> Then, later, the man goes to the workshop where the shoemaker tells him*:*
> *"Hard work?" Why, yes, of course it is. Just try to pull this thread.*
> *Can't manage it? I thought not. Try something else instead.*
> *Hammer this bit of leather, on this iron, on your knee,*
> *It don't hurt me a blessed bit – but you just try and see!*
> *"Don't want much of that" you say? Ah! You haven't learnt the trick,*
> *I'll tell you about it sometime. Can't learn it all so quick.*
> *You're right, it is hard work, sir and more than that, it's Art*
> *To do it all yourself like, and fit in every part.*
> *The missus sews the tops, of course, but then that's not so tough,*
> *But if you had a day at that, you'd say you'd had enough.*

These extracts show that Andrew Neely had much more respectful and sympathetic attitude to the working people of Ringstead that that shown by most of his predecessors, even those who worked hard to improve their parishioners' lot. In 1898 Andrew moved downstream to Islip as Rector, where his father died, and in 1902 he married Edith Mary, Canon Hodgson's daughter, at nearby Aldwincle. He became the organising secretary for the *Society for the Propagation of the Gospe*l in the archdeaconry of Oakham and then Northampton. He moved on to become rector of Milton Malsor in 1904 and Rural Dean of Preston in Northamptonshire in 1910 before retiring to Eastbourne, where he died in 1937.

Reverend Neely (top right) and Mrs Neely (middle of 2nd row with large white collar).

Taken from photograph of Milton Malsor Church Choir 1916.
With the kind permission of Milton Malsor Historical Society (www.miltonmalsorhistory.org,uk).

Charles William Cotes (1861 – 1900) Vicar 1898 - 1900

Charles William Cotes had been born in Highworth in Wiltshire. He was the eldest son of a Solicitor, also Charles, and his wife Lucy. His father died when Charles junior was still a small child. He was sent to Abingdon School and then on to Pembroke College in Oxford.

It seems that there was a strong Australian connection for, on the 23rd July 1876, his mother had remarried, to Joseph Guillaume, who was from the department of the "Honourable Chief Secretary, Melbourne, Victoria. The wedding notice also discloses that Lucy was the sister of the late Bishop of Grafton and Armidale in Australia. This brother was called William Collinson Sawyer who had become the first Bishop of this new diocese where he arrived in Grafton, after many months of travel on 13th March 1868. Two days later and, perhaps significantly, he and one of his sons were drowned when his boat was upset on the Clarence River on Sunday 15th March 1868.

With this Australian connection it is no surprise that after being ordained first as a deacon and then as a priest by the Bishop of Llandaff and then serving his curacy at nearby Roath that he too travelled to Australia and became the curate at Christ Church in the South Yarra diocese of Melbourne. In 1891 he moved on to New Zealand where he was the incumbent at St Mary Mornington with Green Island (the parish was split soon after his arrival) and finally became vicar of Wakatipu from 1894 to 1896. It was while he was in New Zealand that he married Brenda Marian Traill on 5th April 1894 at the Holy Innocents Church in Dunedin.

Brenda was the daughter of John Traill who had been born in the Orkneys, son of a local Laird He was a civil engineer with the Admiralty and Brenda had been born in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). In 1891 she was living with her parents and siblings in Glamorgan in Wales but there were Traill families in New Zealand including three of her uncles who had set up businesses there but were also well known

local naturalists. Charles the eldest had died in 1891 but his two half brothers, Walter and Arthur lived well into the Twentieth Century. It seem s likely that soon after the Census that Brenda travelled out to visit them, perhaps with others of her family.

Charles seems to have had little home life as a child, being either at boarding school or staying with his widowed aunt and her elderly spinster sister at Purton, near Wootton Bassett. This lack of a home base may have given him a restlessness and it was perhaps this trait, or possibly illness, that brought the couple back to England in July 1897.

In 1898 he became the curate at Wellingborough Parish Church and a year later was offered the living at Denford cum Ringstead by the current patron, the local M.P., Mr Stopford-Sackville. For some reason he fell out with his church wardens so that they resigned although they still continued to attend the services. He seems to have been in poor health and was in the habit of sitting up very late at night. The *Evening Telegraph* continued with what happened on that night of Saturday 3rd November 1900 and the following morning. His widow, Brenda, gave evidence at the inquest held at the *Cock Inn* in Denford.

> *On Sunday morning she saw deceased about two o'clock. He came up to the bedroom and he said it was a nice fire she had. He came back in a quarter of an hour and witness asked if he was coming to bed. He replied, "Yes, in a minute or two," and then went down again, and witness went to sleep. She missed him at seven, and as he had been to bed she went to see if he was in the study, but she did not find him there. Next she sent the maid to the church, and the answer that she brought back was that he was not there. Witness then sent the maid to the sexton, whilst the girl also found the boat was not in the boathouse. Witness saw their boat down the river empty. The man Groom went down the river and found the boat and oars. Deceased had not been well for twelve months, but she did not know that he was depressed at all. He never threatened to commit suicide, and she knew no reason why he should. He was in no financial difficulties. Deceased was in the habit of sitting up late, and often used to fall asleep on the sofa and come to bed when he woke at two or three o'clock in the morning. It was no unusual thing for him not to come to bed till two. It was not usual for him to go out in the boat at that time in the morning. Deceased was a very good swimmer. He had fainting fits lately and nearly fainted in church once or twice.*

Although his body was not located at first, Groom confirmed that he later found William face down in the river, just over the side of the boat. Dr. J. W. Gainer of Thrapston stated that he knew that William had a weak heart.

The jury returned an open verdict of "Found Drowned" but it would seem likely that William was struggling with depression and had committed suicide. He was thirty-nine years old. He was remembered in the *Northampton Mercury* that he had become:

> *. . . a warm favourite for his singular gentleness of disposition, transparent consistency, and devotion to his sacred office and there i9s not one of his parishioners of either place who had other than a good word to say of him. Always of delicate health the work of looking after two villages was rather too much for him and probably told upon his weakened constitution.*

There was a large procession at William's funeral at Denford on Monday 5th November 1900 led by the St. John Ambulance Corps and the local clergymen, but there is no gravestone or memorial in either church or churchyard. Is that because of his suspected suicide? His widow, Brenda, was staying in Newcastle on Tyne where her brother Ronald lived. She moved on to Wales, where she had grown up, so perhaps William is remembered elsewhere.

He was replaced by Francis N. Pickford who had also been in the Australian clergy before returning home but our century is up and we must leave the Anglican curates and vicars of Denford and Ringstead. As Percival Sandilands pointed out, there was not a resident "gentry" and for most Ringstead people the vicar or curate would have been almost their only contact with University graduates or the old aristocracy. For much of the century the vicar and his family would have looked outside the village for their social lives and spent much of their time away from the area. By the end of the century this was changing and the vicar and his family took an increasing part in village events. This was partly the changing times but the school had also been a catalyst in this greater integration in the community. It could have been a lonely life sometimes, of the village but yet set apart from it by position and education, and some of the clergy, like William Cotes, may have found this hard to cope with.

The local vicars and curates would have buried a number of men, women and children claimed by the waters of the Nene and two of their own also drowned in those quiet, dangerous waters.

Some of the London newspapers confused the death many years earlier of the former curate Benjamin Clay and thought it referred to the former vicar so that Andrew Neely found himself reported dead. He commented that this was the second time in the last few years, (the first perhaps being his father).

Throughout these stories of the local clergymen we have seen an increasing undercurrent of animosity between the vicars and some sections of the village community, especially the Non-conformists. We might believe that Ringstead was a particularly rough-and-ready place which, as Percival Sandilands remarked, had no resident landed gentry to set a proper example. However, recent research by Robert James Lee, focussed on Norfolk, has shown that the problems of Ringstead were mild compared to many rural places elsewhere. Henrietta Batson, the wife of a Berkshire vicar, wrote both novels and gardening and genealogical books. In an article in 1892 in the magazine, *Nineteenth Century,* she stated:

> *Our labourer hates his employer, he hates his squire, but above all he hates his parson. They are all richer than he is, and he has been told by social agitators that they have taken the money and lands which should be his . . . He hates them but he conceals his hatred as well as he can, so that he may still benefit from their kindness.*

Others saw the animosity arising, not from misplaced envy, but from the part the parson played in the landowners' and politicians' attempts to keep him in his allotted place. Whatever the interpretation of the reasons for these stresses, the fact is that they did exist. Henrietta Batson's bitterness was perhaps born out of the daily observation of her husband, a clergyman who suffered from severe depression. All the men we have looked at would have had different personalities, prejudices and work ethics but, in broad terms we see the change from the hunting and fishing vicars of the early years to the hard-working resident clergymen at the end of the century. The new workload of the management of the school, and the religious instruction there, together with an increased pastoral role within the community would have led to a very different lifestyle to that enjoyed by men like Charles Proby and John Watson. The vicars also began to come from different backgrounds and be educated at Anglican Colleges and the new redbrick universities. The world was changing and vicar's son and labourer's son both died in the terrible war that was soon to come.

The church from south showing group of small children and a well trodden Friar's Path to Raunds

Pre 1906 Postcard from Author's collection

Comparison of Ceremonies performed by Vicars and Curates in Ringstead in the Nineteenth Century

The table below shows what proportion of ceremonies were conducted by vicars and curates. I had to make decisions about some entries so it is important not to see small differences in comparison figures as significant. It might be argued for the less active vicars that they were looking after Denford while the curates saw to the Ringstead flock. However, if we look at the first half of the century at the Denford Registers we see a very similar pattern of attendance for the clergymen. With Isaac Gaskarth, the curate, only seems to be doing most of the duties in Isaac's last years. Charles Proby was accused of being a pluralist and the figures bear this out with him officiating at only 5% of christenings in Ringstead. John Watson began as a largely non-resident pluralist and his curates carried out almost all the ceremonies. There is a sudden change and from July 1837 he conducted most of the ceremonies sometimes helped by his son, also John, who became the curate at Doddington and other members of his family. It is only in the last year of his life, when his blindness and old age prevented him, that he conducts few ceremonies. Apart from the short incumbency of William de Pipe Belcher, for the rest of the century, the vicars ran both parishes and only called on curates or other clergymen in times of illness or for other temporary reasons.

One of the watershed moments for the church was the first half of the 1830s. The bishops of the Church of England were seen as key in the throwing out of the 1831 Reform Bill in the House of Lords. On November 5th 1831 effigies of bishops replaced Guy Fawkes on many bonfires. There was a cholera outbreak starting in 1831 (which claimed John Watson's wife) and many saw it as a judgement of God upon the nation. King William ordered a national day of fasting and humiliation on 21st March 1832. Church of England clergymen were abused and even stoned in the streets of London and the new industrial cities. The abuses of its powers by the church with its control of the only two universities, and some of its clergymen getting very rich through influence led to a

Commission which started to redistribute the church's wealth among the clergy and to stamp out pluralist and non-resident clergymen. Added to the death of his wife, it may be that these were factors in the move of John Watson back to his country parishes

VICAR	**VICAR or** CURATES (C) officiating		**Approx** **Years**	**Baptisms**	**Marriages**	**Burials**	
ISAAC GASKARTH 1777 – 1811 *(figures from 1800 only)*	**Vicar**	-	**11 (from 1800)** (24 total)	**95** **(70%)**	**31** **(91%)**	**64** **(74%)**	
	Daniel Crofts (C)	-	-	40	3	23	
	Others	-	-	-	5	-	
	TOTAL (approx no. per year)			**135** (12)	**34** (3)	**87** (8)	
Note: Isaac officiated at all baptisms up to 12th December 1808 and all burials until 24th January 1809. All Curates & Others after those dates. Similar for marriages although Isaac did take 2 marriages in later period.							
CHARLES PROBY 1812 - 1822	**Vicar**		**10**	**8** **(5%)**	**5** **(9%)**	**9** **(12%)**	
	R. Morgan Vane (C)			56	18	16	
	Thomas Brownrigg (C)			35	10	15	
	Harrison Packard (C)			16	8	6	
	Thomas Symonds (C)			53	10	22	
	Others			7	6	6	
	TOTAL (approx no. per year)			**175** (17)	**57** (6)	**74** (10)	
JOHN WATSON 1822 - 1851	**Vicar**		**29**	**159** **(37%)**	**68** **(42%)**	**130** **(41%)**	
	Thomas Symonds (C)			20	2	8	
	Benjamin Clay (C)			38	18	23	
	Thomas W. Brown (C)			7	1	12	
	Charles W Chalklen (C)			55	17	36	
	Edward Bowman (C)			91	34	60	
	T. H. Wilkins (C)			46	9	18	
	Others			19	12	27	
	TOTAL (approx no. per year)			**435** (15)	**161** (6)	**314** (11)	
Note: John Watson's tenure was in 3 distinct phases: 1822 - 1836 he officiated at 1 baptism. 1836 – 1848 he was at almost all baptisms and from then until his death his blindness meant the curate took over most duties. A similar story for marriages (I have not included 3 marriages between death of John and the appointment of W Belcher.) T. H. Wilkins acted as a "locum" and is in							

"Others" before he became an "Assistant Curate". Burials are broadly similar. (6 burials between death of John and appointment of William not included.)							
WILLIAM de PIPE BELCHER	**-Vicar**		**3**	**17**	**7**	**16**	
				(55%)	**(44%)**	**(57%)**	
1852 - 1854	J. G. Rogers (C)			9	9	6	
	Others			3	-	6	
	TOTAL			**29**	**16**	**28**	
	(approx no. per year)			(15)	(5)	(9)	
ALFRED J. SANDILANDS	Vicar		**7**	**34**	**29**	**64**	
				(87%)	**(88%)**	**(90%)**	
1854 - 1862	No Curates			0	-	-	
	Others			5	4	7	
	TOTAL			**39**	33	**71**	
	(approx no. per year)			(5)	(5)	(10)	
Note: I have not included 5 'others' who officiated at Baptisms and 2 others at marriages between death of Alfred Sandilands and institution of Percival Sandilands. John Bywater officiated at 9 burials between death of Alfred and 30 May 1863							
VICAR	**CURATE**		**Approx Years**	**Baptisms**	**Marriages**	**Burials**	
PERCIVAL R.R. SANDILANDS	**Vicar**		**11**	**157**	**26**	**109**	
				(97%)	**(84%)**	**(89%)**	
1863 - 1874	No Curates			-	-		
	Others			5	5	14	
	TOTAL			**162**	**31**	123	
	(approx no. per year)			(15)	(3)	(11)	
Note: 1 "Other" baptism and 4 burials between Percival Sandilands and Edward Sandford not included. Percival employed a curate (E. Kitson) but he seems to have acted as schoolteacher. Percival had a hunting accident on 1st January 1870 which accounts for most of the "Others".							
Edward Sandford	**Vicar**		**5**	**39**	**26**	**45**	
				(74%)	**(84%)**	**(85%)**	
(1874 -1879)	No long-term Curates			-	-	-	
	Others (incl. 12 E. A. Sandford)			14	5	8	
	TOTAL			**53**	**31**	**53**	
	(approx no. per year)			(11)	(6)	(11)	
2 marriages and 2 burials between death of Edward Sandford and his son taking over are not included							

Edward Armitage Sandford	**Vicar**		**5**	**48**	**23**	**74**	
				(98%)	**(88%)**	**(85%)**	
	No Curates			-	-		
(1880 – 1885)	Others			1	3	13	
	TOTAL			**49**	26	87	
	(approx no. per year)			(10)	(5)		
1 marriage and 4 burials for "Others" between E. A. Sandford and W. O. Leadbitter not included.							
William O. Leadbitter	**Vicar**		**8**	**111**	**45**	**74**	
				(90%)	**(88%)**	**(85%)**	
(1886 – 1894)	No Curates			-	-	-	
	Others			12	6	13	
	TOTAL			**123**	**51**	**87**	
	(approx no. per year)			(15)	(6)	(11)	
2 marriages and 4 burials between W.O. Leadbitter and A.C. Neely not included. From burial of Thomas Stains on 14th March 1881 all burials in new "secular" Cemetery.							
Andrew C. Neely	**Vicar**		**4**	**71**	**18**		
				(100%)	**(100%)**		
(1894 – 1898)	No Curates			-	-		
	Others			-	-		
	TOTAL			**71**	**18**	*	
	(approx no. per year)			(16)	(9)		
Burials not included from now on as now in new Cemetery and many "certified" people officiating							
William Charles Cotes	**Vicar**		**2**	**25**	**10**		
				(100%)	**(100%)**		
(1898 – 1900)	No Curates			-	-		
	Others			-	-		
	TOTAL			**25**	**10**	*	
	(approx no. per year)			(13)	(5)		
2 marriages after his death not included. Burials as for Andrew C. Neely*.							

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Chapter Twelve

Hard as Iron

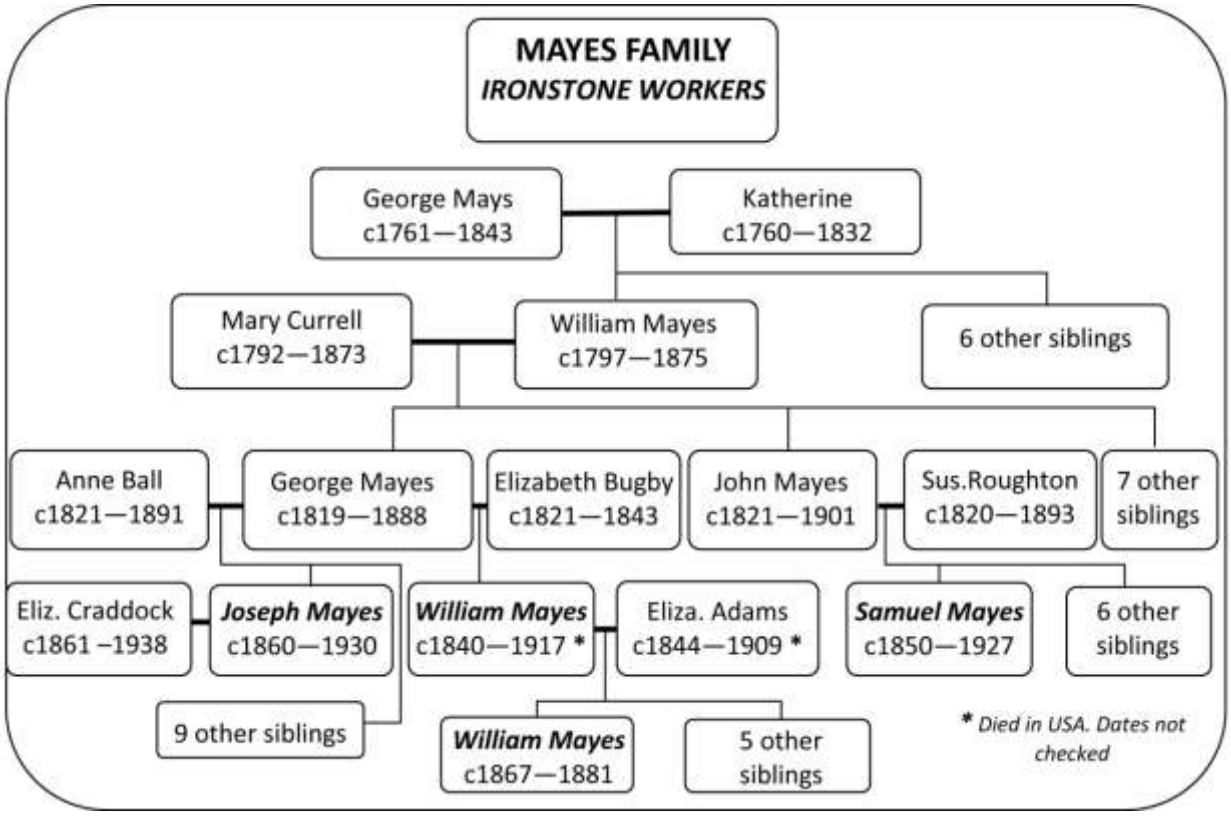
William, Samuel and Joseph Mayes

In *Ringstead People* we told the story of John Ball who was killed by a fall of earth in a quarry in Islip in 1886. Ironstone had been mined along the Nene Valley in Northamptonshire in small pockets since Roman times at least. Most had been small pits which were quickly abandoned and little sign of them or the smelting remains. We only see the warm brown ironstone blocks in some of the older local houses, built before the local brickworks and then the larger ones of the Whittlesey area went into production. The ironstone once again became valuable with large-scale coal mining and the coming of the railways which made fast, cheap transport available. The building of the railways also revealed the iron ore deposits not far beneath the Northamptonshire soil. This ore was exhibited at the Great Exhibition in 1851 and ironmasters were attracted to Northamptonshire, mainly from the north. At first ironstone went to Derbyshire and Yorkshire to be smelted but then Derbyshire coal started being brought south, first to Islip and then to Corby.

A quick count through the Ringstead Censuses gives some indication of the short duration of quarries in the village and the surrounding parishes. There were quarries at Great Addington, Woodford as well as briefly at Raunds, and along the north side of the Nene. We cannot be sure, therefore, that all the men shown in the Census worked in the Ringstead Quarry. We know that John Ball was a Ringstead man, and that he was killed near Islip and it seems likely that men also came into the parish to work. Nevertheless the figures do mirror the rise and fall of the local pit. In 1871 there were no ironstone labourers but by 1881 there were twenty-eight plus Low Smith who was an ironstone contractor and Frederick Green who was a clerk in an ironstone works. By 1891 this number had reduced to thirteen, only five of whom had been working in 1881 and by 1901 this had reduced to seven. The younger men seemed to be looking elsewhere for work. Of course, some men stayed on and so the workforce aged from Census to Census but this was only a part of the story and by 1901 none of the workers were under thirty years old. The Ringstead Quarry near Cotton Farm (Ringstead Grange) had closed in 1891 and presumably some would have worked clearing the site and levelling the ground after that. Nevertheless the Ringstead men in 1901 would have been travelling out of the parish, probably to the Islip area, to work.

We will mainly concentrate on one local extended family to see how those members who became ironstone labourers fared. The Mayes or Mays family name was a well-known one in the Ringstead Parish Registers. The first entries for the name are twin girls, Mary and Martha, born to Thomas and Susanna May, who died in January 1772, a few weeks after their births and Mary Smith May, daughter of Thomas and Jane May, baptised on 3rd April 1773. There is also a Daniel Mays, son of Michael and Sarah, baptised on 22nd January 1792. There is no other sign of these families however. The first entry for the children of George and Katherine (or sometimes Catherine) is for the baptism of a son, John, on the 15th July 1787. It is this couple who seem to have been the main source of the name in the parish throughout the nineteenth century although there is another smaller branch of the family emanating from William Parrish, or Parris, Mayes who may be related in some way to George as both sides of the family make use of Fairy or Farey as a first or second name. However, Fairey, and its variations, was also a common surname in the area so this may be due to a number of intermarriages. The Mayes surname grew steadily in the parish until there were 58 with that name in the 1901 Census.

Of course not all the family remained in the parish and it is one of these travellers who we will look at first. William Mayes was the sixth child of George and Katherine and was baptised in the Ringstead Parish Church on 10th September 1797. He married Mary Currell from Great Addington on 13th July 1818 and their first child was George baptised seven months later. Seven further children followed of whom five died in childhood, including twins Matthew and Mark. George married Elizabeth Bugby in 1840 and they had two children, William soon after their marriage and Daniel who was baptised on 28th July 1843 on the same day as his mother was buried. Daniel died too four months later. George remarried, to Ann Ball in Ringstead, on 14th October 1844. Ann(e) was one of the few children of Daniel and Phoebe Ball who did not either emigrate or join the armed services and so leave the parish. George and Anne then had a further ten children, of whom four were baptised as Wesleyans, but it is William the only surviving child of George's first marriage that we will be following first.



William seems to have remained apart from the new family after the death of his mother Elizabeth for in the 1851 Census he was a ploughboy, living with his grandparents, Thomas and Mary Ann Bugby, in Higham End, Raunds. His grandmother died in 1853 and in 1855 his grandfather married again, to Susan Black who was some twenty-five years younger than him. William was with them both in 1861 and he was now a farm servant. Thomas Bugby was shown as a farmer of 40 acres so it may be that William was working for his grandfather. A description of someone as a farm "servant" rather than farm labourer usually meant that the person "lived in". (Thomas Bugby and his second wife died within a few weeks of each other in 1874.)

On the 16th January 1862, William married Elizabeth Adams from Raunds, (although born in Northampton). It appears that the couple moved to London some time before 1869 because both of their eldest children were born in Old Ford or Bow in the East End. Their eldest son, William, was born in 1867 and a second son, Frederick, was christened Frederick Fairy Mayes on 19th December 1869. At the time of his birth registration the couple were living at 11 Usher Road (now near the 2012 Olympic Park) and William's occupation was just recorded as "labourer".

We next encounter the family at 59 Railway Terrace in New Marske, near Redcar in the North Riding of Yorkshire. New Marske, as its name implies was a small village which had been built recently to house the ironstone miners of the local pits. The discovery of workable iron ore deposits in North Yorkshire had coincided with a depression in agriculture in the East of England. Men flocked to the area from Cornwall, Wales and East Anglia and some of the ironmasters sent their agents down to the agricultural fairs to try to hire labourers for the mines. The couple are there in 1871 with the two boys but it looks as if they tried their luck again in London for in the 1881 Census when they are back in New Marske, now at 26 Dale Street, the two youngest children, both daughters, Elizabeth (3) and Eliza (1) are both shown as being born in Bromley in London. This almost certainly refers to Bromley by Bow which is not far from Usher Street. There are two middle brothers, Daniel who is eight and Albert who is five, who were born in New Marske. It seems therefore that the family were there from about 1870 until 1877 going back to London until 1880 before returning to Marske. Of course, it is possible that Eliza went to London, perhaps to a relative, to have her two daughters but it would be very unusual for this to happen at the time and it seems most likely that William and Elizabeth moved each time with their young family, looking for a better life and failing. We know that the youngest son, Albert joined the Marner Road School in Tower Hamlets on 18th August 1879. He would have been four, a little later that year, on the 15th October.

Others from the East Northamptonshire area also tried their luck in the Yorkshire iron-ore mines. In the 1881 Census there is a George Mayes at Marske in Guisbrough who was born in Aldwincle. William's half brother George, baptised in Ringstead in 1850, seems to have tried his luck in the Marske area. He was a shoemaker by trade and in the 1881 Ringstead Census he is an army shoemaker again. He is living in Church Street with his wife Ruth and daughters Florence, Hannah and Eliza. The eldest and youngest girls were born in Ringstead but Hannah was born in Marske by Sea in about 1875. We cannot be sure but it seems that this George was lured by the chance of better wages, but, not surprisingly, found the work was not for him. Perhaps he left when William went back to London to try his luck there again.

William is, in 1881, once again an ironstone miner in Marske. His eldest son, William at thirteen years old, is still a "scholar" but his school education was soon to be over. We know that some time that summer he became a "Trapper" at Upleatham, one of the local ironstone mines. The trappers were the youngest boys employed in the mines. At one time children as young as six did this work, often remaining in the mine for eighteen hours a day and so, for much of the year not seeing the daylight from Sunday until the Saturday following. A *Children's Employment Commission* had been set up and its Report shocked the Victorians with its firsthand accounts of the treatment of women, girls and young boys in the mines. Samuel Scriven was one of the Commission Inspectors who looked at conditions in the West Riding of Yorkshire. He wrote:

> *The children that excite the greatest consideration are those who stand near the doors to open and shut them for the "hurriers" to pass. They are called "trappers" who in the darkness, solitude and stillness as of night eke out a miserable existence for the smallest amount of wages. In the best appointed pits the air is rarified by a fire which is kindled at the foot of the upcast shaft, the atmospheric air being directed down another called the downcast shaft and then made to pass the remotest corners of the pit by doors place at intervals in the main gates or byways.*
>
> *The trappers are therefore made to stand at the back of these holding a cord in their hands all day long. I can never forget the first unfortunate creature that I met with. It was a boy of about eight years of old which looked idiotic, like a thing, a creeping thing peculiar to the place. On approaching and speaking to him he slunk trembling and frightened into a corner*

under an impression that I was about to do him some bodily injury and from which neither coaxing nor temptation could draw him.

The Commission led to the Mines and Collieries Act of 1842 which stopped the employment underground of females and boys under ten years old. A further Act in 1870 made 12 the lowest age that a boy could work underground and also reduced the maximum working week for under-16s to 54 hours. So conditions had improved a little by the time William became a trapper but it was a miserable, boring, cold, lonely job carried out in almost complete darkness with, perhaps, a single candle for light and comfort. It was also a dangerous one. Boys had been injured or killed when they "deserted their posts". William too wandered from his post, whether from boredom or to stretch his limbs and on the 29th September 1881 and just a few months after he had left school he was crushed between the "tubs" and a pit prop. He was buried in the churchyard of St Germain's in Marske-by-the-Sea. It was an open windy spot near the cliff edge and beyond the churchyard wall was the wide expanse of the sea. Only the tower and spire of the church now remain and there is no sign of young William's grave.

This is an earlier drawing but although very young children had been stopped from working underground the trapper's life would have been little changed.

Perhaps it was their son's death that decided William and Eliza to try for a new life. William, with the older boys, Frederick and Daniel, sailed from Liverpool on the *City of Berlin,* an "intermediate" ship with three masts and a funnel. They arrived in New York, via Queenstown in Ireland, on 3rd September 1886. They were obviously the advance party for, on the 25th June 1887, the *British Princess* with Eliza and the younger children, Albert, Elizabeth and Eliza aboard, docked in Philadelphia. It would not have been an easy life for the family in its new home. The 1890 Federal Census was largely destroyed in a fire but the 1900 Census shows William and Elizabeth with sons Albert (24) and a mystery son called Earl who is 20 and born in October 1879. "Earl" may be a clerical error and, perhaps, it is Eliza. William is now 59 and they are living in Old Forge, Lackawanna, Pennsylvania. He is a day labourer but owns his own house. The 1910 census shows him as a widower living on his own in Old Forge. His age is given as 67 years but he was actually 69 years old and his occupation is shown as a miner in a coalmine The anthracite pit of the area was what put the township of Old Forge on the map, (although it also had many Italian immigrants and is known today as the" Pizza Capital"), but mining is no occupation for an old man. His son, Albert was also living in the area with his family and was also a coal miner. We must leave the family there.

If we return to Ringstead we find two other members of Mayes family who were ironstone workers. There were some shallow mines in the Northamptonshire iron ore fields but at Ringstead the ore was quarried. The ironstone was taken from a moving deep trench, the topsoil taken off first and then any overload of subsoil or rock was barrowed precariously on planks, two or three inches thick and 12 – 15 inches wide, over the trench to a parallel spoil heap behind. These planks, supported by trestles, could be as much as 45 feet above the ground although it is unlikely that they would have been anywhere near this height at Ringstead. The ironstone beneath was removed by blasting and picks and loaded into trucks on a track which ran along the bottom of this trench and was occasionally shifted sideways as the quarry face was cut back. The land would be reinstated behind the trench so there would not have been a large hole in the landscape but, rather, a deep scar creeping across the hillside. The workers would not have had to suffer the claustrophobic, cramped darkness of the mine nor the perils of flooding and bad air but it was still a very dangerous occupation and accidents were commonplace.

An Ironstone Quarry near Burton Latimer (probably in 1890s).

This picture show the planks only a few feet above the ground but there are concrete supports on the extreme right of the picture which probably indicates that the "gullet" becomes deeper. We can also see the mess beneath the planks on which man and barrow might fall.

With the kind permission of Burton Latimer Heritage Society
(www.burtonlatimer.info/industry/ironstone-mining.html)

As we saw with the death of John Ball at Islip, the overload of soil would be undercut by digging and the earth allowed, or helped, to fall so that it could be barrowed away and the ironstone strata exposed. Only too often the soil fell prematurely and men were engulfed and killed. In 1889, a young Ringstead man was nearly killed in the same way as John. The *Northampton Mercury* reported under the "Ringstead" heading:

> *On Thursday, July 18th, a young man, named Major, of this village, had a very narrow escape from death. He was at work in the ironstone quarries, near Ringstead Station, when the ground above gave way. He just noticed it in time to run out, but not before a portion of it caught him on one side, inflicting serious injuries, though, fortunately, no bones were broken. He was immediately placed under the care of Dr. Mackenzie, of Raunds, and is doing well.*

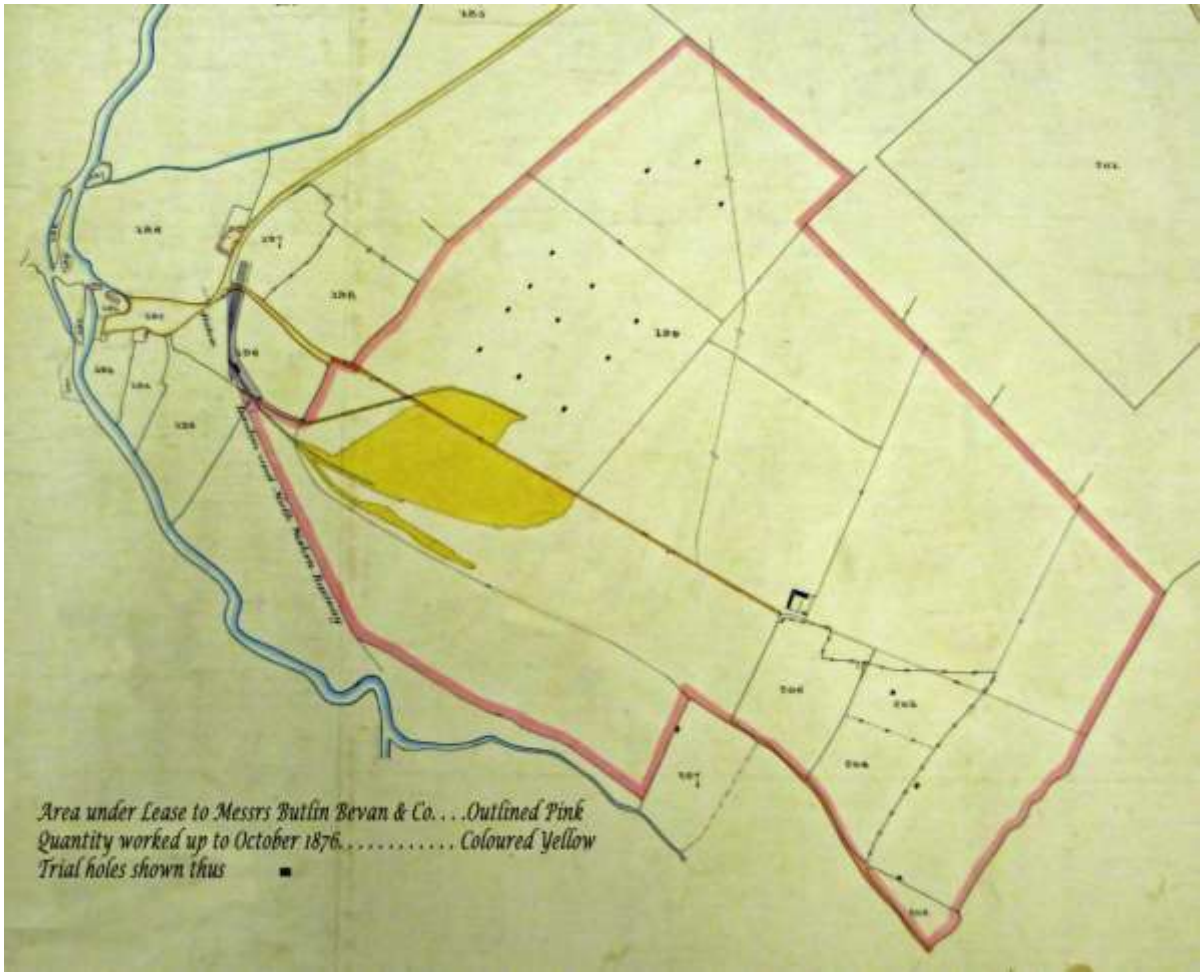
Of course, the reason that the men took these risks was that they were paid by piecework at a rate of about 3d. to 4d per cubic yard of iron ore. These rates included:

> *. . . excavating the cover and wheeling it to the dump side and, in some cases, removing topsoil and subsoil separately, levelling the ground and putting it back into cultivation.*
>
> *[Notes to accompany an Industrial Archaeology in Northamptonshire Exhibition at Northampton Central Museum in 1970]*

It is difficult now to imagine what an industrial area parts of the Nene Valley were. The first modern ironstone quarries were opened in the Wellingborough area in 1855, (although there was a small earlier pit at Woodford), and 74,084 tons of ironstone were excavated in Northamptonshire. This increased to 1,412,255 tons by 1873. Thomas Butlin worked out how to smelt the difficult Northamptonshire ores but good, cheap transport was a vital factor in making the extraction viable and the coming of the railways to the area made this possible. The other factor was the opening up of the Derbyshire coalfields which the railways could bring to the area. C.H. Plevins was a coalmine owner in Derbyshire and, with his partner John Kidner, he opened up the Islip blast furnaces.

There were several quarries in the Ringstead area. One, run by the Newbridge Iron Ore Company, operated from 1873 to 1881. It was near Glebe Farm to the west of the bridleway going northeast from Willy Watt Mill to Woodford. It had a tramway operated by a small locomotive, to sidings near Willy Watt Mill. It linked to a tramway from the Addington Quarries, run by Thomas Walters, which were just to the north and midway along, the road from the mill to Great Addington. There was also a tramway which brought the ore from further west, via a level crossing on the Great Addington to Little Addington road.

There was only one quarry, however, that was in Ringstead Parish in this period. It was operated by Butlin, Bevan and Company and was open from 1871 until 1891. Looking at the Ordnance Survey 25inches to a mile map (1st edition 1885) produced a few years before the site was closed, the quarries are not mapped, but it does show a horse-drawn narrow gauge tramway with a short southern spur. There had been two quarries south of Ringstead Grange (Cotton Farm on Eric Tonks' map in *Ironstone Railways and Tramways of the Midlands*.) and perhaps this spur was a siding or led to the smaller western quarry. This tramway led down to sidings to the east of the railway tracks near the station.



Map of showing Ringstead Quarry and trial holes for future work (1876)
Based on 1840 map with relevant details added in 1876.

With the kind permission of Northamptonshire Record Office (Ref: C(S) 164.)

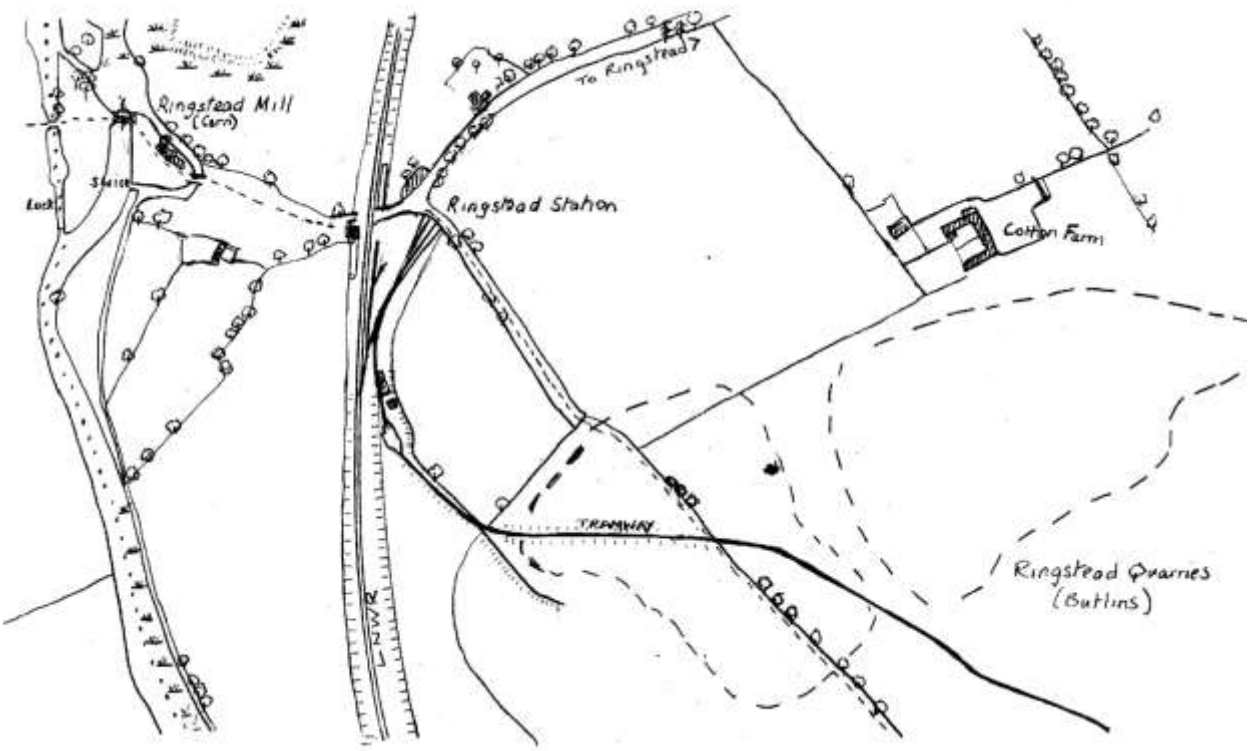
We cannot be certain of the exact process by which the ore was put into the railway trucks but it seems likely that the quarrymen would have loaded the ore manually into the tramway "tubs" and these would have been taken by gravity down to the valley beneath. A brakeman sitting at the front would have controlled the speed with a simple brake block system. The horse would probably trot behind, perhaps tethered to the last truck. At the bottom the load would be dumped, probably using side-tipping trucks. It was believed by Eric Tonks, who wrote the definitive books on these tramways, that the ore was "calcined", probably in the valley bottom. This was best done in kilns with the air excluded but it is likely that at Ringstead the ore was just made into large clamps over a bed of coal and mixed with slack coal and set on fire. The coal would have been brought in by railway and the calcining clamps may have been made where there is a break shown on the map between the tramway and the standard gauge sidings.

This process burnt off much of the moisture and carbon dioxide content and made the ore lighter and thus more valuable, cutting down on transport costs. Once the ore had cooled it would be loaded again by hand into standard gauge trucks. Some mechanical shovels were beginning to be used but it is unlikely that they would have been employed in a small quarry like Ringstead. The job of loading up the calcined ore was dusty unpleasant work and the men doing it would have been

recognizable as they walked or cycled home by the layer of red dust that caked their faces and arms. There would have been no pithead baths for them.

The empty tramway wagons would be taken back up the slope by the horse or horses ready to be filled again.

It would have been hard, back-breaking labour in all weathers. There would also have been smoke and fumes from the clamps always drifting around the area. It was said, of the ironworks at Islip that it made pigs and old men.



Ringstead Quarries.

Map and tramways based on Ordnance Survey 25 "to mile 1st Edition 1885 (NRO). Quarries based on map by Eric Tonks (see References). [Note: Cotton Farm now Ringstead Grange].

In the 1881 Census Joseph Mayes is shown with his parents, George and Anne. As we have seen after the death of Elizabeth, mother of the William who went to America, George remarried, to Anne Ball. Both Joseph and his cousin Samuel, son of George's brother John, are ironworkers in the local quarries. We can only guess that it was at the Ringstead quarries near Cotton Farm. It certainly would have been the most convenient to walk or bike to. We said that the quarry gangs had a preferable life to the underground miners but the winter of 1880/1881 had been one of the bitterest on record. The Mercury reported on 22nd January 1881:

> *THE WEATHER.- The frost set in here on Tuesday last week and had, at the time of writing, continued with increased severity. On Wednesday and Thursday from 12 to 14 degrees of frost were registered. The severity of the frost further increased. Before sunrise on Saturday morning the thermometer had fallen to eight degrees Fahrenheit. The water in the meadows*

was all frozen over on Friday and Saturday and great numbers repaired thither for skating and sliding. Scores were congregated on the ice on Sunday. On Monday the river was all frozen over and the ice was so firm and good from Raunds meadows to the Ringstead Paper Mills that a fine piece was opened up for skating and hundreds of people of both sexes from the surrounding villages of Raunds, Ringstead, Stanwick, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, and the Addingtons (Magna and Parva), assembled and disported themselves. A bonfire was lit on the ice and hot coffee and other refreshments supplied. Tuesday was one of the roughest and most inclement of the season. A strong wind prevailed from early morning, and, blowing from the east and northeast was bitterly cold and searching. This increased to a gale in the afternoon, when a snowstorm also set in. Tuesday night may be pronounced to have been one of the roughest nights ever experienced in this locality for a great number of years. The storm continued more or less all night so that on Wednesday morning the streets and roads were completely blocked with drifts which lay on the roads to a considerable depth and the traffic along some roads had to be altogether suspended. The snow-drifts along the Ringstead, Chelveston and Hargrave roads were from four to six and a half feet deep, and a gang of from 30 to 40 men were employed in cutting a way through them for vehicles to pass.

Would the men have been working and seen from the quarries this laid out before them? Certainly, in the terrible storm in early 1877 that killed three boys on those same hillsides, it was the quarry men who came to the collapsed barn and tried to rescue the boys. [See story of the Gale Tragedy in *Ringstead People*]. At times they might have settled for the moderated temperature of the mine rather than the intense bitter cold and wet of winter or the baking heat of summer.

The two Mayes cousins would have found the work hard and tedious, as much labouring work was. It was also, as we have said, dangerous, with the fear of being buried alive. The tramways themselves were also another hazard and, as with young William in the mine, a moment's inattention could be fatal. On the 4th March 1882 the *Wellingborough News* reported:

One day last week a labourer on these works [Ringstead Ironstone Quarries], was knocked down by several wagons descending an incline. The whole of the wheels passed over both his legs nearly severing them from his body. It appears the poor fellow remained where the accident happened for nearly three hours before any doctor arrived. He was then removed by rail to the Peterborough Infirmary where it was found necessary to amputate the left leg above the knee and the right leg below it. He is progressing as well as can be expected from the serious nature of the injuries.

One wonders if a man could survive for so long, with such a loss of blood that an accident like this would have involved, unless someone had given him some first aid. We described earlier how the wagons were loaded and moved and it may be that empty trucks rolled back down the slope and knocked him over. It they had been fully loaded it seems certain that they would have severed his legs completely. Perhaps the brake failed or had not been properly applied. We can only speculate. I have tried to find out who it was that sustained these terrible injuries and what happened to him but so far without success.

For whatever reason, Joseph decided that quarry work was not for him and he moved to Wellingborough. It was there, in the parish church, that he married Elizabeth Craddock on 11th March 1888. He was twenty-eight years of age and living at 19 Gold Street. He is shown as a labourer and it seems likely that he was now a bricklayer's labourer for that is his occupation in the 1901 and 1911 Wellingborough Censuses. In the year after his marriage he was summoned by Mr. Ford, relieving officer of the Thrapston Union to show cause why he should not contribute towards the

support of his mother, Annie Mayes who was “chargeable to the common fund of the Union”. His financial position was discussed and he was ordered to pay the 10d a week that he had been originally asked to pay by the Guardians.

Joseph and Elizabeth had four children and he died in Wellingborough in 1930 age sixty-nine years.

His cousin Samuel, some ten years his senior, was the son of John Mayes, an agricultural labourer, and his wife Susannah. John and Susannah had at least seven children and Samuel was the sixth, baptised on 26th May 1850 in the Ringstead Parish Church. In 1851 he is with his family but they are all living with Elizabeth Roughton, Susannah’s widowed mother, who is a pauper. John and Susannah and their family moved into their own house and by 1871 they were living in London End, that triangle of poor cottages where Back Lane met the Denford Road.

Samuel’s grandmother, Mary was buried on 22nd July 1873. In November 1875, Mary’s widower, William Mayes, now seventy-eight years old, blind and living alone after the death of his wife, becomes increasingly depressed and one Monday morning he cuts his own throat. An inquest was held at the New Inn and the jury heard that his behaviour on the previous evening had been very strange. Their verdict was, “That deceased committed suicide while in an unsound mind.” William, unlike poor Thomas Bates who took his own life in similar fashion in 1840 was allowed a church service before his burial in the churchyard.

There were regular accidents at the Ringstead Quarry. The *Northampton Mercury* reported on an Inquest held at the *Black Horse Inn* on 28th September 1889. It was on the body of Alfred Smith from Ringstead who had been a labourer at the local quarry. On 26th September he had been loading ore into the trucks when it appears that he had an epileptic fit. He fell backwards “some six or seven feet into the truck and struck his head”. He recovered enough to walk home but complained of a pain in his stomach. The following day he was dead. Mr. J. Bird, the surgeon, believed that it was probably from peritonitis, caused by the fall.

There was another serious accident at the quarry when a twenty-one-year-old local man, Herbert Coleman was wheeling a barrow of ironstone over a plank ten feet above the ground. If you look at pictures (also see end of chapter on John Ball, Ironstone Miner in *Ringstead People*),which show the way the men pushed heavily loaded barrows across the narrow planks over the ditch to the spoil heaps behind , it would seem that accidents were inevitable. Herbert fell to the ground onto his head and face: The Northampton Mercury of 3rd October 1890 reported:

> *Dr. McKenzie of Raunds immediately attended and found the upper lip completely cut through and lying on the right cheek and the chin all separated from the lower jaw. The wounds were stitched up and dressed and are progressing favourably.*

Herbert, who was the illegitimate son of Ann Coleman before she married elderly widower, William Major, some forty-five years her senior, continued as an ironstone labourer in 1891 but Samuel had become a navigation labourer. Samuel was still living with his parents. He was a bachelor and remained so all his life. His father John, at 70 was described as a “cottager”, which by this time, especially after the loss of the Ringstead Open Fields in 1841, was a rather archaic term. It probably meant that he had a small piece of land round his house and kept a pig and some hens. Traditionally he would have had to do some day labouring and John’s entry does record that he also did some general labouring to give him a small income.

By 1901 Samuel had returned to ironstone labouring. The Ringstead pit closed in 1891 which may have forced Samuel to look for other employment. It may be that he was now working in one of the

pits north of the Nene but because the name Mayes was so common locally we cannot be sure which one. He could have been the Mayes mentioned in the "Woodford" section of the *Northampton Mercury* on 30th August 1895 but we cannot be sure; (in the photograph below we see a G. Mayes):

> *On Saturday a man named Mayes, at work at the ironstone pits, was driving a peg to loosen the earth. It suddenly gave way and caused him to fall a great distance with the earth on the top of him. One of his legs was seriously injured.*

This photograph is labelled "Five men digging ironstone at Woodford House". On the back, the men are named (assuming names are as if looking at photograph). The Man with head cut off by photographer: J. Major (possibly Ringstead man James Major who was an ironstone labourer born in about 1850). and then from left: G. Saunders, G, Mayes, E. Manning, W. Riddle.

With the kind permission Of Northamptonshire Record Office. Ch(H)127

We do know that by 1911, now aged 61, he had become a jobbing gardener. He is living in what seems a spacious six-roomed house with his widowed sister Elizabeth Sawford keeping house for him. It is perhaps a surprise to see that Samuel, who would have been born too late to attend the Ringstead School, writes and signs the 1911 Census form with an assured neat hand.

The Mayes surname was widespread in Ringstead and the neighbouring villages by the end of the Nineteenth Century. We see it in the local musical entertainments including the Ringstead Brass Band, parish events, football teams, bell ringing and on most local committees. We have looked at three members each some ten years apart in age who at some time were ironstone labourers. The quarries were short-lived and so it was not a job for life and only the unmarried Samuel stayed in Ringstead. His widowed sister, Elizabeth Sawford died in 1924 and Samuel followed some three years later.

The Ringstead Quarries near Ringstead Grange have long gone and it is almost impossible to make out where once there was noise and dust and the occasional crack of an explosion, nor the trucks

clanking behind the horses on the way to the sidings where it is possible that the ore was calcined (or burnt). I am writing this on 23rd April 2013.and earlier today as I stood on the bridleway, all I could hear was birdsong and the occasional sound of traffic on the road below. In the distance there was the urgent cry of a cuckoo trying to herald in a late spring. If you look carefully you may be able to see that at one point where the bridleway crosses the old route of the tramway that the ground is lower than the hedge. That is all. Like Mallows Cotton village, the quarry sites have gone. Who would now want it back?

View from Mallows Cotton bridleway, near the site of the quarries. 23rd April 2013

Authors' Photograph

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My thanks to Vivienne Marshall for alerting me to the death of William Mayes in Marske and for checking the Mayes family details. My thanks also to Philip Morris for his advice on the tramway workings. Any mistakes are, of course, mine alone.

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Chapter Thirteen

End of an Era?

Centuries do not in themselves define eras, nor do the reigns of kings and queens. Often it is the spread of new technology such as iron smelting or steam power and sometimes it is terrible wars which change the mindset of a nation. Usually it is a more gradual process than our old history text books would have us believe. We have seen that the Boer War was a terrible precursor of the First World War and that much of the new technology that would define the Twentieth Century was already being developed before the death of Queen Victoria. We have also seen the increasing political strength of working men (although not so obviously of women yet). We will end these accounts of Nineteenth Century Ringstead people with the Coronation of Edward VII in 1902.

Edward, like the present Prince of Wales, had to wait into old age to succeed his mother to the throne. Fat philanderer he may have been but he was popular in the country and after the austere Victoria of the final years Edward seemed to bring the hope of happier times. The Boer War was also in its final throes and communities across the country set up committees to celebrate the new king.

Victoria had died on 22nd January 1901 and Edward's Coronation was set for 26th June 1902, The *Northampton Mercury* for 20th June carried advertisements and news of preparations for the great event. You could send off 2½d in stamps for the "Song of the Coronation" subtitled "Sons of England Raise Your Voices" which was a "good stirring song with telling chorus, giving utterance to feelings which are at present time uppermost in the heart of every loyal subject of the King". There was also an advertisement from the Dorman Engineering Company of Northampton for:

> *A Coronation Gift. – The Minerva Lock-stitch Sewing Machine makes a right Royal present at a moderate price*

The readers arealso asked to buy a new Coronation cycle from *W. Harding and Company*, Cycle manufacturers whose premises are opposite Marefair Post Office.

We also are told that *Brice's* is the best place to hire or buy a flag and that they have rosettes from a penny each.

In Ringstead too all was set for the big day under the guidance of the "energetic hon. secretary" Thomas Johnson", the schoolmaster. Then two days before the big day Edward was taken ill with appendicitis. The Mercury for the 27th June reported:

> *It would be difficult to put into words the effect produced on the nation by the ill news so suddenly sprung on them on Tuesday mid-day. Up to that time the enthusiasm of the approaching Coronation festivities and gathering farce as the day of the great event drew near, and then in a moment the nation fell from the summit of jubilant expectations to the deeps of anxious apprehensions and bitter disappointment. "The Coronation is indefinitely postponed" was the unwelcome announcement.*

Up to this time appendicitis was not operated on generally and the mortality rate was high. There had been many improvements in antiseptics and anaesthetics in the last half of the Nineteenth Century and the royal doctor Sir Frederick Treves drained the infested abscess through a small incision. The next day Edward was sitting up in bed smoking a cigar. Appendicitis became a vogue operation and many people alive today carry the scars of its popularity.

We see below a photograph of a group of men who have just set up a large garlanded arch across the road in Carlow between the *Axe and Compass* and the *Swan.* This area was often used for festivities. If we compare this photograph with the Ringstead Band picture on page 66 of *Ringstead People* we can pick out a number of familiar hats and faces. It seems likely that it was taken in the week before the cancelled June Coronation.

Group of men who have probably just put up a garlanded arch for the Coronation of Edward VII in 1902. I have enlarged the picture to show men's faces but have lost the arch as a result.

From the Ringstead photographic archive held by Peter Davies

The Coronation went ahead, finally, on 9th August 1902 but we learn from the *Mercury* of the 15th August:

> *The Coronation festivities were continues on Saturday. The original programme was carried out on June 24th in its entirety. Leaving a balance in hand of £11, with which a free tea was again provided for all the children under 14 years of age, all persons over 60 and all the widows and poorer inhabitants. A public tea at 4d. was also provided. The weather was all that could be desired, but owing to the two days' previous wet weather the teas were held indoors. The children assembled in the Schoolroom at three o'clock to the number of 200, and after tea each one was presented with a Coronation medal. Afterwards the elderly*

people and the general public assembled in the Schoolroom and Temperance Hall to the number of 400. Tea over, all adjourned to the paddock known as the Grove, kindly lent by Mr. W. Ratcliff. The Woodford Prize Band played selections. Various games and sports, principally for the youngsters, were provided and dancing took place. All seemed to enjoy themselves well.

We see that in Ringstead they had decided as all had been planned that the original celebrations should go ahead. We are not told what these "original celebrations" were but we have a report from the *Mercury* of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations, some five years earlier, in June 1897 which may give us some idea of what would have happened in 1902.

Proceedings commenced with a procession formed as follows:- Four horses gaily decorated, their riders representing sailors and soldiers; these were followed by a dozen cyclists; then came the band and the children numbering over 100, the boys having scarlet bands across the shoulders; wagonettes conveying members of the Parish Council and Jubilee Committee; and the infants brought up the rear. The first stoppage en route was made against Mr. Peny's shop, where the band first played the National Anthem and the processionists then sang the verse. The Rev. J. Bates gave a brief address. The procession then wound its way through the streets stopping again opposite Mr C. Ratcliffe, where the anthem was again sung, and Mr. George Smith incidentally referred to the age of the Queen, stating that he was born in the same year and the same week. Having arrived at the New Inn, the company dispersed, the children going to the Temperance Hall for their tea. The adults proceeded to the Factory for a meat tea, which was done justice to by 350 people. An adjournment was afterwards made to a close, where the usual games were indulged in, the band enlivening the proceedings with their selections of music, and a very enjoyable and memorable day was brought to a close by again singing the National Anthem, and the children received as they left the field an orange and a bun each.

The people of Ringstead may have had two bites of the cherry but it was not the same throughout the county. In Daventry the Board of Guardians discussed the Workhouse food. The members were concerned that officers seemed to have special 9d. (pence) joints and they went on to discuss the extra food for the inmates:

Mr. Lucas gave notice that at the next meeting he should move that a committee be appointed to go into the whole matter of officers' joints. – The Board resolved to postpone the extra out-relief granted for the Coronation and as far as possible stop the extra diet for the inmates until the Coronation actually takes place.

As we look at this wonderful photograph we can remember again the description by H. E. Bates of the Northamptonshire shoemakers:

The impression I really get is of a dry, droll, unshaven independence and it is not at all an unlikeable quality.

Although we do not see so much evidence of the women of Ringstead, and there is no similar photograph of them, we have seen from the accounts that they were in general a strong, independent group too who would not be easily cowed by authority. Perhaps this later photograph

from the 1920s of the Mothers Union will give a hint of their character. One would not wish to cross them.

Photograph of the Mothers' Union 1920s

Reproduced with permission of the Northamptonshire Telegraph.

My time with the village of my father's ancestors has now finished. I have come to admire many of those people for the qualities that Bates described. I hope that people today will not generalise the past of the village but see it for the place it really was and the people for the individuals that walked its streets. If you can stroll down to the river and picture the quarries by the path to Mallows Common or the often noisy station yard by the level crossing or the mill making paper or grinding corn on the Nene: If you can look at houses and imagine the real men and women and children who lived in them and see the families being waved off on their epic journeys across the world: If you can wander among the graves in the churchyard, old Baptist burial ground or the Cemetery and remember some of the personalities that lie beneath those stones, now sometimes crumbling into anonymity: If you can do just some of these things then I will feel that my time has not been wasted.

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Appendix

Amendments and Additions to *Ringstead People (Book 1)*

I have found some extra information and also some errors in the Ringstead People book since publication and have put these amendments and additions in this section with the original chapters to which they refer. (In the Second Printing of the book I did manage to correct the error in the William Roberts chapter).

David Ball

October 2013

Chapter s One and Fourteen: Elisha Ball, Thomas Ball, Daniel, John and Sarah Ball

A number of the life stories deal with the children of Daniel and Phoebe Ball. Most of their large family left Ringstead to become emigrants to the New World or soldiers. Phoebe is, as many women of the time, rather hidden from public view by the records. The style of this report is of the Music Hall variety, that one *Mercury* reporter seemed to delight in for his court reports. This one from 11th August 1849 does show something of her feisty nature, an essential survival tool in such a large household in those tough times:

> *Elizabeth Jacques, who failed to appear to a summons, was brought up under a warrant charged with assaulting Phoebe Ball. Both of these amiable ladies are natives of Ringstead, and appear to have a knowledge of the stronger terms of the English language. After a few preparatory shots, the war of words thickened something after the manner of the Railway Overture. You're a fussick, said Phoebe calmly. You're a liar retorted Bess, sharply. You, a blowed up strollegar! said Phoebe sharper still. After a few more puffs, both of the human engines were fairly off, and all that could be distinguished was - Oh you nasty - don't say so - dirty drab - fat cat - penny-bustle - splay-foot - red-nose - beer-gin - brandy - Oh! oh! oh! oh! oh! oh! and then they softened down as though they had reached a station, to Oh Phoebe, for shame! Oh Bess, you may say so! - did you ever? - no never! - well, I declare! and then they stood and gazed at each other like exhausted first-class engines. After this process the case was heard, and Elizabeth fined 5s. and costs, which were increased on account of her refusing to appear to the summons, and in default she was committed for three weeks.*

Unfortunately, although we know that Bess was summoned for assault we have no idea why, how or where the assault took place. The reporter was too pleased with himself to bother with such questions.

Note: I could not find **fussick** in books on local dialect words but the online Merriam-Webster Dictionary states that it was used in Australia from the 1850s to mean picking about for gold or gemstones in abandoned mining excavations but came from the United Kingdom meaning 'to ferret about'. Originally *fussick* meant to bustle about and *fossack* or *fussock* meant a troublesome person. Obviously the meanings seem linked but it is the latter meaning that is being used here.

I think that **strollegar** simply astrologer?

Chapter Six. The Butcher of Ringstead? William Weekley Ball

I have found two articles in the *Northampton Mercury* (British Newspaper Archive) which add to the story of the disappearance of Lydia Attley. The 2nd and 9th April 1859 issues of the newspaper report that on March 24th a skeleton, with the head placed between the legs, had been found by some men when ploughing Mr Passmore's field in Little Addington. It reports that the spot where it was discovered was about a mile from Ringstead and it was shallowly buried in a field that had not been ploughed for some years. The link to the disappearance of Lydia Hetley [sic] and William Wheatley [sic] Ball is made and it reports that , "The discovery has caused quite an excitement in the locality". We see why there was some scepticism in 1864 when another body was found. We also see the belief in Ringstead that Lydia was buried somewhere in the area.

The other article is in the Saturday 6 September 1851 issue and throws some light on William's leaving of Ringstead for Ramsey. It tells of the 29 August Petty Sessions where Thomas Dunmore, a tailor from Ringstead, complained of an assault by William Peacock on 22nd July. It reports:

> *. . . Mr Ball, a butcher of Ringstead, was removing his household goods and furniture from thence; that a large concourse of persons followed the waggon to a considerable distance, insisting on Ball giving some account of the girl who was so mysteriously missing, before he left town. Whereupon the complainant, fearing the ropes of the waggon would be cut and the furniture injured, went up as a friend of Balls to protect him and his goods, when the defendant immediately struck him on the head with his fist. Fined 5s and costs £1. 8s. 6d.*

We see that William had to face the angry crowds as he left but we also see that he had some friends who stood by him. It was almost exactly a year after the disappearance of Lydia that William, too, left Ringstead

Chapter Eleven. Clicker: John Ball (b.1882)

My father had told me that John (Jack) Ball had been summoned for playing football and there is confirmation in the *Mercury* on Friday 27th February, 1901. Under the heading, *The Football Nuisance*, it reports that:

> *John Ball, shoe hand, Raunds, was charged by Mr. Corby, Clerk to the Urban Council, with playing football in the Pleasure Ground, at Raunds. - The Bench decided not to convict and the case was dismissed on payment of 6s. costs.*

[In my father's version it was for playing football there on a Sunday. I am not sure if this is a detail that has been missed out.]

Chapter Nineteen. Blood on the Stubble: William Roberts

Robin Stewart Bolton has alerted me to an error in this story. The baptisms of William's children are a little confusing and it seems that an unbaptised (as far as I can tell) daughter, Mary, was buried on 10th August 1804. William (born in 1805) **survived** and married Ann Maria Knight in Raunds in 1828. He did not die on 10th August 1806 as I have put in the book.

Chapter Twelve Papermakers William Mitchell and others

The mills of Ringstead are a little bewildering. Not only was Willy Watt sometimes called Ringstead Mill but some tenants moved from one to the other and both mills produced paper and ground corn at some time. It is also likely that both had two wheels operating on these different products at the same time. There are references to "Ringstead Mills" which seems to indicate that two wheels were operating, one of which seems to have always been for corn. The exact location of Ringstead Mill has also been difficult to define exactly although we know that it was on the Nene close to the Railway Station so we are talking of yards rather than miles when considering the alternative positions.

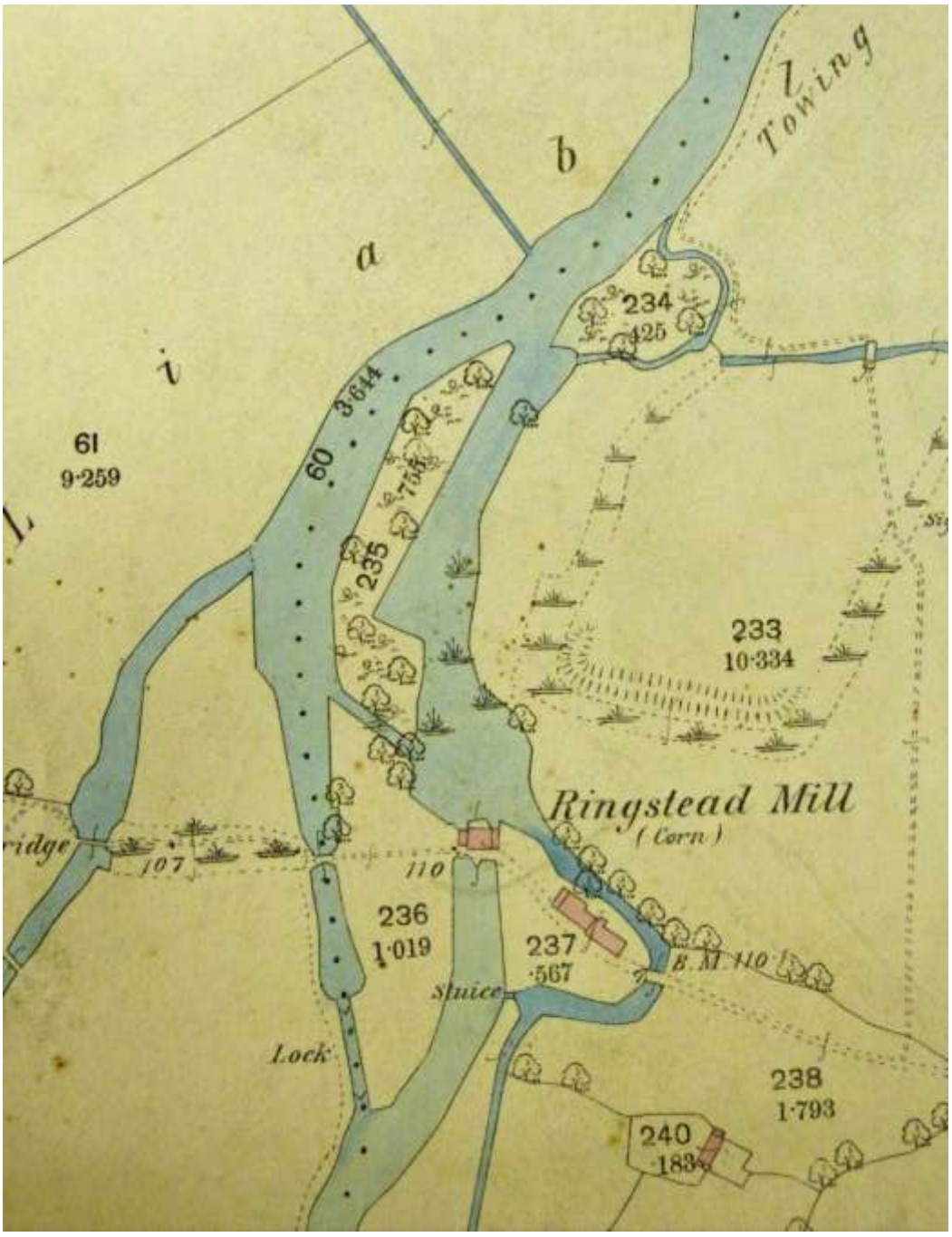
Looking at two pieces of evidence seems to confirm my belief that the mill was sited where the large modern sluice gate is now in place.

Ringstead Mill. (Early Twentieth Century)

From the Ringstead Photograph Archive held by Peter Davies

Firstly if you look at the photograph of the Mill in the early Twentieth Century when it was beginning to fall into disrepair it is clear that there are two arches possibly feeding two wheels. The building itself is square and does not appear to have ever provided living quarters.

If you look at the map, to the right of the number 110, you can see the division of the river shown. The long building to the east of this was a row of cottages in which the Muirheads were shown living in 1901 with a trade of shoemaking. There is a stream which curls around from a small sluice gate and around the cottages to the river but not near enough to them to power a wheel there. Was this an overflow stream in times of flood or was it perhaps a part of the process of papermaking. The rags would have to be washed and then stewed in water as part of the process of breaking the linen and cotton into its constituent fibres.



From1885 2½ inch to a mile Ordnance Survey map

With the kind permission of Northamptonshire Record Office

At the end of its life the mill became a part of the social life of the village although one suspects that the teas as well as the pleasure boats and fishing punts were organised form the cottages not from the mill building itself. William Muirhead had been born in Edinburgh and in 1901 he is living at No. 1 Mill Cottages with his wife. He is shown as a shoemaker. Next door at No. 1 Mill Cottages lives Ernest Holmes born in Chesterfield, and also a shoemaker, with his wife Elizabeth who was born in Birmingham. By 1911 William, now 65 is a widower living at "The Old Mill House" with his nephew, also William. William junior is 30 years old is an ironstone labourer from Norwich where his uncle had moved to with his parents before coming to Ringstead. His wife Eliza is a machinist in a boot factory and with them is their ten-year-old daughter Eliza. At some stage after this, as at Willy Watt, other businesses seem to have been tried. William Senior died in 1912 so it is the younger William who seems to have started the picnic and boating enterprise that a few older Ringstead people still remember. **A** swing was provided so it was hardly Wicksteed Park.

To PIC-NIC PARTIES, SCHOOL PARTIES
AND OTHERS.

WILLIAM MUIRHEAD,
Of Ringstead Mill,

BEGS to return thanks to his numerous Patrons for their kind support during past Years, and to inform them that he is still in a position to accommodate Parties (providing their own provisions) with . . . **Cups & Saucers, Teapots, Tea Urns, Cloths & Boiling Water, at a charge of 2d. per head**, and again solicits a continuance of their patronage and support.

Parties of 50 can be accommodated at one time.

PLEASURE BOATS AND A FISHING PUNT FOR HIRE.

A SWING IS PROVIDED FOR THE CHILDREN'S AMUSEMENT.

The Mill is close to the Ringstead & Addington Station and the main river.

From the Ringstead Photograph Archive held by Peter Davies

Chapter Twenty-one Wifebeater: Korah Dicks (Dix)

Brenda Hazel has found, through the Genes Re-united website some further brushes with the law of Korah Dicks and some of his sons.

In the *Northampton Mercury* for 12 July 1856 we learn that Korah Dicks was sentenced to six months hard labour for assaulting his wife again. It seems that this must have occurred soon after he was released from six months gaol for a similar offence. Korah's character did not improve with age for, on 20th February 1871, now an 'aged man', (although probably less than sixty years old), he was charged with assaulting a little girl called Catherine Phillips, six days earlier. Catherine alleged that:

> *. . . she was running past the defendant with a shoe in her hand when he raised a stick and struck her on the head as she passed him. - P.C. Balderson said that he was attracted to a*

crowd assembled round the parties just after the assault took place. The little girl was crying. Defendant said he would serve her ten times worse afterwards.

Catherine may not have been entirely innocent because, it was alleged that she had first spat at Korah. The report states that he had paid the £1 fine, but it seems not, for five days later he was committed to three weeks imprisonment, (the default sentence).

On 20th May 1871 he was again charged with stealing two handkerchiefs from Alice Brown but because of his 'great age', and his having been in prison for several days, he was discharged. [Korah died two years later and we gather from these reports that his drinking and, perhaps, the treadmill, which ruined the health of many prisoners, had taken their toll.]

Perhaps inevitably, some of Korah's sons also had trouble with the law. In September 1865 Odd Dicks was charged with stealing a mangold wurtzel, the property of Joseph Dearlove, who stated that he had taken him to court for him to be admonished, as thefts had been increasing. The *Mercury* also reports on:

Police Constable Packer, who caught the boy in the turnip field sitting underneath the hedge with the wurtzel beneath him.

Some two years later Odd was charged with assaulting Thomas Baker on the 10th June and had to pay a fine and costs amounting to £2 in all.

The *Northampton Mercury* of the 16th January 1969 reported that Hod [or Odd] Dicks, a lad of sixteen or seventeen, was charged with 'feloniously breaking into the house of William Major of Ringstead on 28th November'. William's son, Daniel had seen Hod escaping out of his father's window and found inside that the rooms in confusion and two watches taken out of the box in which they were kept, but still lying there. At the Quarter Sessions in March Hod was sentenced to three calendar months on gaol (he had already been in custody for two months). Hod had pleaded with the court:

'I hope you won't do much to me; I'll never do any more,' and then wept.

In the 19th November 1881 issue of the *Northampton Mercury* it reports that:

Lod Dicks and Hod Dicks, brothers, Ringstead, were summoned for being drunk at Irthlingborough on the 1st inst: - Neither Hod nor Lod appeared but the mother appeared for Hod but not for Lod. . . P.C. Brown gave evidence of seeing the brothers, Hod and Lod, on the evening of the 1st lying cheek by jowl on the road between Irthlingborough and Ringstead helplessly drunk and tried to put them on the right road home.

Their mother also paid Hod's fine but she left Lod to sort his own affairs out.

We should recognize that some of these were petty offences that many country boys and young men might have committed. I can certainly remember, when a small boy in a west Northamptonshire village, that the local children stole mangold wurzels from the fields to make lanterns for Halloween.

Chapter Twenty-four First Post: Noah Green and others

On the first page of the chapter Thomas Green is shown as being born in 1759 and married to Jane Meadows. This is a slip. It should be John Green. My thanks, again, to Robin Stewart Bolton for alerting me to this error.