Family Roots

Family History Society for Eastbourne & District
www.eastbournefhs.org.uk

Zoar Baptist Chapel, Lower Dicker.

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FAMILY ROOTS FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY (EASTBOURNE & DISTRICT)

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Editorial

It was nice to see you at our face to face meetings but a bit of a disappointment on the turn out, everyone has got used to not going out I suspect.

Two meeting reports for April this year, at the time of booking Helen Baggott we assumed we would be holding our AGM on Zoom again; as this was not the case Helen kindly agreed to reschedule her talk and Rosalind Hodge stepped in for her very interesting talk. Thank you Rosalind.

John Tyhurst has been busy transcribing the Zoar Baptist Chapel Memorial Inscriptions from a Family Roots book first published in 1983 and the resulting CD is now available at £5.00 plus postage.

Till next time John Titmuss.

FORTHCOMING TALKS

4th August: Ian Dowding - From Banoffi Pie to Fish Bananas

1st September: Shepherds of the South Downs - Ian Everest.

6th October Rob Wassell - The history and background of the Belle Tout Lighthouse and Beachy Head Lighthouse at Beachy Head.

3rd November Richard Crook The Development of Victorian Eastbourne

December TBA

The cover image © John Tyhurst

Local Blacksmiths and Wheelwrights

Speaker: Rosalind Hodge

Family Roots talk after AGM – Thursday, 7th April 2022

By: Jenny Wootton

We were delighted to welcome Rosalind Hodge, long-term member of Family Roots, who gave us a very detailed and well illustrated talk after the AGM about local blacksmiths and wheelwrights.

Blacksmiths and wheelwrights used to be two of the most important craftsmen in previous centuries when even the smallest village used to have its own forge, but now very few of these skilled crafts still exist.

In 1987 only approximately 15 wheelwrights were recorded in the whole of the country.

Rosalind's talk focussed on blacksmiths and wheelwrights in Willingdon, Jevington and Eastbourne. The blacksmith's skills were important because not only did he make all his own tools, but he also made tools for many other trades. In medieval times they would have made armour, but in the 19th and early 20th centuries they would have made ploughs, hoes, rakes, shepherd's crooks, sheep shearing tools for farming, as well as horseshoes. The blacksmith would also have been the local farrier.

He would also have made everyday items such as hinges, door handles, grates, nails, as well as many household utensils.

Rosalind had several blacksmith ancestors in her family tree.

Two of her 4x great-grandfathers were blacksmiths and her husband Anthony had wheelwrights in his family, so she had been able to do research into both skills through family connections. She pointed out that wheelwrights were sometimes harder to identify as they were often recorded as carpenters in the census.

Wheelwrights would have made carts, wheelbarrows and handcarts for other trades as well as wheels for wagons. John Roberts, baker in Willingdon, would most certainly have had his baker's cart made by the wheelwright whose business was right next door to his shop in Upper Willingdon village.

Rosalind had spent much of her early childhood with her grandparents who were both very interested in local social history, and from a young age she was taken round Lower Willingdon by her grandmother who used to tell her about the people who lived there and their occupations.

The village was self-contained and self-supporting before the main road was built, and her grandmother often commented on how it sounded way back then, when the sound of horses hooves and iron tyres on flint roads was very different from modern tyres on tarmac roads of today.

Her favourite sound was of the blacksmith's hammer on his forge which could be heard all over the village.

There were two blacksmiths and two wheelwrights in Willingdon in the 19th century, one of each in Lower and Upper Willingdon. Stephen Catt

was the wheelwright and Tom Duly the blacksmith in Lower Willingdon, and the forge was where Willmoths Garage now stands. It would have been a natural progression from forging tools for wagons to making garage tools to turning the site into a modern garage outlet.

The wheelwright was in Red Lion Street (now Wish Hill) in Upper Willingdon and the smithy was a couple of hundred yards down the road. John Sampson Seymour, known as Sampson, was the wheelwright.

He was born in Jevington in Dumbrells Cottages, and the Seymours were well known in the area. His grandfather Stephen was licencee of the Eight Bells in Jevington and his great-uncle Joseph was a mill owner in Wannock and Polegate. Sampson was apprenticed to James Peerless, the wheelwright in Jevington, and later went on to work for John Fears in Willingdon, eventually taking over the business from him.

Rosalind told us about how the wooden wheels were made and showed several detailed slides of the different processes involved and the different woods used, and also of the wheelwright and the blacksmith working together to fit the metal tyre onto the wooden wheel. The wheelwright not only made wooden wheels for carts, but also the wheels that were needed in the belfry for bell-ringing. Solomon Geering was the wheelwright at Westham and had his works at Black Nest, Hankham, which was part of Westham parish.

The blacksmith's forge in Upper Willingdon was in Red Lion Street, and

the blacksmith lived in Spring Villa. The front of his home was an ironmonger's shop, run by his wife, which sold every imaginable item needed for cleaning the house and gardening at that time. Robert Russell, the blacksmith, was born in Seaford and apprenticed to Thomas Elliott in West Dean. He married Caroline Elliott, his boss's daughter, and came to work for Edwin Mockett, the blacksmith at Upper Willingdon. Edwin died within 12 months of Robert starting work, from eating suspected poisoned mussels, and Robert carried on running the forge for Edwin's widow. He would have made horseshoes for all types of farm horses and carriage horses in the area, including those for Lord Willingdon's carriages at Ratton Manor. Oxen were also used on the two farms in Willingdon, at Ratton and Chalk Farm, and they needed special shoes called cues, two for each foot, as they have a divided hoof. Oxen had difficulty balancing when one leg was off the ground so the blacksmith had a special balancing frame which would hold the beast while being shod.

Gaius Carley, born in Upper Dicker, worked on a farm when he was 12 and then moved to East Hoathly where he started working at the forge of Johnny Turner, who was a direct descendent of Thomas Turner, grocer of East Hoathly, who wrote his famous diary. Gaius moved to West Sussex, where he continued working as a blacksmith for 50 years, and became a specialist farrier making shoes for horses that had injured their hoof or

had a disease, which enabled the hoof to heal.

Oxen had ceased being used on farms in Willingdon before WW1 and gradually as fewer horses were used and farm work became more mechanised, the blacksmith's work declined. John Harold Brooker was the last traditional blacksmith at Upper Willingdon and by the 1950s his work was mostly repairing lawn mowers and sharpening tools. The forge was demolished in 1967/68.

There are still working forges in this area. The one at Michelham Priory is open to visitors and Nigel Stenning, blacksmith from Ditchling, gives demonstrations once a month. There are also forges at Glynde and Firle, and the Hentys had a forge very locally in Ocklynge, which is still being worked. John Robert Henty was born in 1873 in Jevington and apprenticed to Jabez Walters, blacksmith at Jevington. John Robert's son, John William Henty, took over from his father, and wrote in his memoirs that there were 17 working forges in Eastbourne. They worked from 6am to 6pm every day, for 22 shillings a week. Rosalind found 57 blacksmiths recorded in Eastbourne on the 1911 census.

The blacksmith at Ocklynge forge had recently made the brazier for the beacon that was lit in East Dean for the Queen's platinum jubilee.

Other examples of blacksmith's work that can still be seen in Willingdon are the weather vane on the steeple of the church, and the tethering rings outside The Hoo, Church Street.

Many of the Willingdon blacksmiths and wheelwrights are buried in the churchyard of St Mary's church, including Sampson Seymour, John Fears, Robert Russell, Thomas Terry (whose headstone actually mentions his occupation 'wheelwright') and Edwin Mockett (whose headstone mentions the fact that he died suddenly through eating poisoned mussels and that he was blacksmith at Willingdon for 34 years).

—OOO—

From Family Tree magazine.

2 million UK prisoner of war records now freely available at FamilySearch. The free to use collection is comprised of various records held by The National Archives (England) detailing refugees and individuals taken as prisoners of war during major conflicts around the globe.

The records contain the names of military personnel, civilians, diplomats, missionaries, and merchant seamen from nations all over the world.

Posted in the Past

Speaker: Helen Baggott

Family Roots meeting on Zoom – Thursday, 14th April 2022

By: Jenny Wootton

We held an additional Zoom talk in April after our first face-to-face AGM meeting at Ocklynge School. The speaker was Helen Baggott from North Dorset, who had started a project 20 years ago researching the families and backgrounds of recipients of some of the postcards in her large collection, and she had published some of these stories in two books.

Her fascination started with a postcard sent from the USA in 1913 to Private G Freeman, No.16373, in the Grenadier Guards at Chelsea Barracks, London.

Gilbert Edmund Freeman (1894-1916) was killed at the battle of the Somme in 1916, he has no known grave but is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial. Helen decided to trace his family tree using the research tools available to create a snapshop of his life. Gilbert was born in Freshford, Somerset, where his father William managed a mill. William married twice and had one son, William junior, from his first marriage, and a further eight children from his second marriage to Matilda. Gilbert was one of three sons from this second marriage, he also had five sisters. His older brother William moved to Saltash, Cornwall where he set up a business in Fore Street as a nurseryman and seed merchant. Three of his half-siblings moved with him and they became a well known family business in Saltash. Gilbert's name is also commemorated on the Saltash war memorial.

Helen did more research on Gilbert as part of the WW1 centenary in 2018. His name is also recorded on the Chalford, Gloucestershire, war memorial where his parents moved to. Another soldier, Wallace Clissold, mentioned Gilbert in one of his letters home, and he also included a photograph of Grenadier Guards soldiers in Chelsea Barracks, including Gilbert. They had very close service numbers which indicated that this was the correct Gilbert Freeman. Helen shared her research on her Facebook page which resulted in her receiving a contact from America, where Gilbert's brothers had moved, from the granddaughter of Charles

Freeman. Another Freeman relative sent her a photograph of Gilbert with his brothers and sisters and parents.

Helen enjoyed the research so much that she decided to trace the stories of some of her other postcard recipients. While giving a talk in Minehead she found a postcard on Ebay in the United States sent from Saltash to Mr C W Freeman. It was pure coincidence. The card was from William junior, to his half-brother Charles, brother of Gilbert, who was stationed with the Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry at a camp in Minehead. Charles moved to the US in 1913 and married Mabel Simmonds in Boston in 1914. Mabel was born in Devonport, England and her family came from Sherborne in Dorset.

Some of Helen's postcard collections focus on a theme, for example her collection of the Mayflower lead to research into the Mullins family, who have invested in the trip to America. Research into some of her other collections led her to research families that had ties with other US events such as the American War of Independence.

A postcard sent from West Street, Ontario, California to a Leonard Whitford lead Helen to trace the Whitford family history. The Whitfords emigrated to America in 1893. Leonard's father Samuel was a third generation silversmith, and his father Samuel II worked for many years at Great Ormond Street Hospital in London as a secretary, raising funds for

the hospital. One of his sponsors was Charles Dickens. 460,000 children were treated at the hospital and Samuel raised £20m during his period working there. Helen also had cards sent to children in Great Ormond Street Hospital and was able to find out what happened to some of them from the hospital records, and about their treatments. Doris May survived and went on to live a long life, but Henry Prebble died from his illness.

Another postcard in Helen's collection was sent to Mrs Jones, Burdett Street, Liverpool, from her son William. Emily Jones (neé Crease) was born in 1851 in Somerset, one of several children in the family, and her father James was an agricultural labourer. By the age of ten in 1861 she was working for a laundress in Bath, and by 1871 she was working for another family as a cook. She moved to Liverpool where she married Samuel Jones, a ship's joiner, in 1877, and they went on to have a large family. Emily and Samuel were able to provide a home for their children and a life where they could be educated. Son William (b.1880) worked as a clerk in the docks, and one of their daughters became a school teacher. Emily came from a poor family and must have had a hard life and little education, starting work at the age of ten, but over the decades it reflected the changes in education. The Elementary Education Act 1870 established schools for children between five and 10, and ten years later it was compulsory for all children to be educated. Helen Baggott has written two books revealing the fascinating histories behind some of these

postcard recipients – ‘Posted in the Past’ and ‘Posted in the Past Revisted’.

Hardship with the New Poor Law

Contributed by: Rosalind Hodge .

We have heard in two recent talks how the Poor Law Amendment Act brought additional suffering on the labouring classes when they fell upon hard times. Sickness or the lack of work, so common for Agricultural labourers during the winter months, meant families risked being sent to suffer the hard regime of the Union Workhouse. Husband and wife were split up and only the smallest children could stay with their mothers. The Amendment Act was not for the benefit of the poor but for the benefit of the parishes who would now save considerably from the time it was introduced in April 1834. Naturally the clergy were in favour of it as it saved their parishes money. Considering the hardship and misery it inflicted on their parishioners it is amazing to read how these vicars upheld the notion that it was a great moral benefit to the labouring classes, increasing their respect and submissiveness to their superiors. As for it making them more saving in their domestic expenses ……. the majority of labourers lived from hand to mouth having to send their children out to work in the fields or into service, at a tender age, in order to keep a basic roof over their heads. With large families, theirs was a life of scant food on the table, hand me down boots with clothes passed down until they

were unwearable. They certainly didn't have any money to fritter away or waste. The following testimonies, upholding the apparent benefits of the Act, were published in a number of National reports under the following heading:

"Evidence to the general moral effect of the new law on the labouring classes"

By the Rev Henry Moore, minister of Willingdon and chaplain of the Union Workhouse Eastbourne:

"From observations I have been able to make within my own parish, and in this district. I can most readily bear testimony to the beneficial effects arising from the operation of the Poor Law Amendment Act. The labouring people are decidedly more saving in their domestic expenses, less improvident in marrying and more respectful and civil towards their superiors. It gives me great pleasure to be able to state that I observe also a manifest change for the better in the general behaviour of the inmates in the Union-house at Eastbourne: that spirit of discontent and insubordination which prevailed to a considerable extent during the winter months seems gradually subsiding and a more quiet submissive conduct is beginning to show itself. I have no doubt the new Act will produce a great improvement in the moral condition of the labouring classes and prove a lasting and substantial benefit to the country at large."

By the Rev Thomas Pitman minister of Eastbourne:

"Among the labouring classes there is a decided and progressive alteration; even the farmers themselves have observed to me, that there is in the general conduct of the agricultural labourers a civility of manner and attention to their master's wishes, which of late years has been little perceptible and perhaps the most marked difference in the lower orders observable by us as clergymen is the almost total cessation of early and improvident marriages. I should not forget also to mention that as far as I can form a judgement there is a decided improvement in the marriages that do take place; that the altar is not now, as heretofore, disgraced by the appearance of a woman to take upon her the solemn obligation of matrimony in the last stage of pregnancy; a fact which I think goes far to show that the morals of the people are undergoing a change for the better and promises that long may we hope for all the domestic happiness among our poorer neighbours, which result from a match of pure affection in the place of all the wretchedness, discord and misery which are the too sure produce of a marriage commenced in sin and fostered by a hope of procuring a means from the parish of carrying on from time to time sinful indulgences."

Friends of The Eastbourne Hospital

The major project for 2022 is to raise £500K towards a replacement robot for Urology. This requirement has raised questions, given the million-pound fundraising target of 2015 to install the original one. The reason the replacement is required is simply the success of the first robot. After years of continuous use and successful treatment of hundreds of patients, the old machine is breaking down beyond repair. Replacing this machine ensures that Eastbourne, a regional centre for Urology cancer, remains at the forefront of Urology Surgery and that our patients experience gold standard care with faster recovery times and reduced lengths of hospital stay. Additionally, the robot provides excellent opportunities for training so attracts future robotic surgeons to Eastbourne. It is therefore vital that we raise the funds to keep Urology working to the standard the first robot facilitated.

A recent project.

A vital element of training within the DGH is the safe movement of patients. The Friends of Eastbourne Hospital recently made a donation to the Moving & Handling team to purchase a new, 50kg Manikin for training purposes. Catherine Broadbent, Moving and Handling Advisor, acknowledged the donation with grateful thanks, and explained why this equipment is so essential within the training department.

“These manikins will help us to reduce risk and avoid injuries associated with ‘high risk moves’ through the ability to practice the correct and safe procedures for patients and staff within our training session. This will also include us being able practise evacuation procedures for patients during an emergency scenario.

The Patient Handling Manikin has been specially designed to give staff the absolute experience of a real patient’s movement and weight during training, the manikin weighs 50kg. It has enabled us to increase participation from staff within the training sessions which was difficult during pandemic and with the restrictions in place.

The manikin has enhanced the training that we deliver for staff to ensure they keep safe whilst delivering safe care to Patients and will further develop their skills with Moving & Handling to the ultimate benefit of the Patient.“

So please keep saving your milk bottle tops and either bring them to a meeting or drop them off at the Friends Shop.

—OOO—

Don’t forget you can update your research interests that we publish in the member’s page on the website. Send in your updates to webmaster@eastbournefhs.org.uk

The format is

SURNAME / Location / Period / Membership No.

From Family Tree magazine 2

Beyond 2022: an incredible story of rescued records

Launched on 27 June, Beyond 2022 is a virtual treasury of millions of Irish records lost or damaged in the public record office fire of 2022 – painstakingly restored and replicated by a global team of researchers. In our special report, David Ryan looks back at what was lost in the terrible fire, and looks ahead to what the new archive offers those with Irish ancestors.

—OOO—

The Colourful Life of Henry Poolly Cooper.

Contributed by: Ailna Martin

I wrote in the Journal recently of an ongoing email conversation I have concerning my maternal grandmother's Cooper family. I have been researching my Family History for several decades and several members of that family have proved to be especially interesting.

Henry Poolly Cooper was my great-great uncle. Researching Henry's life has been a particularly challenging task over almost 40 years, taking me back & forth as each new fact has been revealed.

Henry was born in Chepstow, Monmouthshire, on 27th April 1834. He was the third child of eight to be born to William Cooper and Charlotte,

née Poolly. The 1841 census for the parish of St. Arvans, just outside Chepstow, records that William was an accountant and at that time there was a small group of boys aged between 10 and 14 years old, living with the family, which suggests that William was running a small school from his home. William later became Clerk to the Chepstow Union.

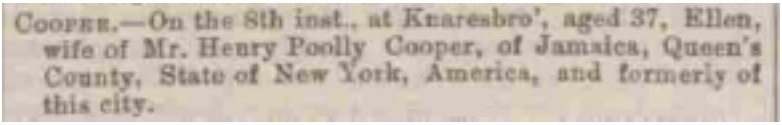
By 1851 Henry's mother had died and William employed a housekeeper. Henry, aged just 17, was working as a paper-maker at a paper mill close to his home. I have been unable to discover where Henry spent the next few years prior to his first marriage to Lucy Harriet Harrison at the Roman Catholic Chapel in Upper Blake Street, York, on 13th April 1857. Within a few short weeks the marriage was to come to a sad end, when Lucy died from pthisis, (tuberculosis of the lung). She must have already been infected when she married Henry.

Despite his early bereavement, Henry soon found a new wife in the widowed Ellen Roberts, née Scruton; Ellen had lost her first husband, James Roberts, in1855, just two years after their marriage. Henry and Ellen married in the Parish Church, Scarborough, on 27th September 1857. Ellen brought a two-year-old daughter to the marriage named Louisa Roberts. Ellen & Henry chose to marry by licence, well away from York. One can imagine the scenario, given the Victorian attitude to mourning. It's possible that by marrying well away from his home town

he might avoid the disapproval that such an early remarriage would invoke.

Within seven months Ellen gave birth to another daughter, Charlotte Elizabeth. If the baby was actually full-term it is clear that Henry had taken up with Ellen almost as soon as his first wife had died. Charlotte was born at the same address where Lucy had died. Another daughter, Ellen Mary, was born on 22nd February 1860, in Goldsborough, near Knaresborough, in the West Riding of Yorkshire. The address entered on the birth certificate is that of Ellen Mary's maternal grandparents, as by this time Henry had emigrated to America, as it states on the 1900 United States Census that he had first entered the United States in 1858. There is evidence on the 1880 US Census that Ellen & the children must have joined him at some time after 1860, as by 1880 the girls were living with their father and his third wife, Sarah Ann, née Dobbs. No doubt if they could be found, a number of passenger lists would record when Henry travelled to & fro across the Atlantic.

Just ten years after his marriage to Mrs Ellen Roberts the following notice appeared in the Yorkshire Gazette on Page 3 of the Saturday edition of 26th October 1867:


COOPER.—On the 8th inst., at Knaresbro', aged 37, Ellen, wife of Mr. Henry Poolly Cooper, of Jamaica, Queen's County, State of New York, America, and formerly of this city.

I imagine that Henry had returned to Chepstow on learning of Ellen's death. He was now responsible for the upbringing of his two infant daughters and also his step-daughter, Louisa. The solution must have seemed obvious to him, and just two months later, on 4th December 1867, Henry married Sarah Ann Dobbs. The 1861 Census lists Sarah as the daughter of the widowed Elizabeth Dobbs, who was the innkeeper at the White Hart Inn, Chepstow.

According to a newspaper report in the Chepstow Beacon, Henry had qualified as an attorney and counsellor at law in the State of New York in November 1860. Then, in 1861 he volunteered to fight for the Republican cause in the American Civil War. The article makes interesting reading and I reproduce it in full below.

"EXTRACT FROM THE "CHEPSTOW BEACON", 26TH JULY1862

We find in the "Long Island Farmer" published at Jamaica, Queen's County, State of New York, America, the following, and have great pleasure in reproducing it to our readers, and the admirers of Mr. Cooper.

"Appointment – His Excellency, the Governor of the State of Connecticut, having appointed Henry Poolly Cooper, residing at Unionville, this town, Attorney and Counsellor at Law, a commissioner within and for the State of New York, to administer oaths or affirmations,

take depositions, and examine witnesses relating to any cause brought in any of the courts of the said State, and to take acknowledgement of deeds, mortgages, and any instruments required by the laws of the said State, to be used or recorded therein, Mr. Cooper qualified and took the oath of office before Justice Bergen, on Tuesday the 17th inst."

Mr. Cooper is a native of this town, and the third son of William Cooper, Esq., Clerk to the Chepstow Union. In November 1860 he successfully passed his examination and was admitted counsellor-at-law in the Courts of the State of New York, and continued in his profession until the President's call for troops in 1861 when, receiving a Commission of 2nd Lieutenant in the 79th Regiment (Highland) Company C, then organizing from Governor of the State of New York, he rendered efficient service in the organization of the regiment and proceeded with the same to Washington, 28th April 1861. At the Battle of Manassas, (Bull's Run) the 79th and 69th Regiments were the principal sufferers, the Captain of Company A was severely wounded, the 1st Lieutenant killed at the outset of the action, and about 400 of the 79th Regiment killed and wounded, the command of the Company devolved upon Lieutenant Cooper, (who with four other officers, had to command the entire regiment during an engagement of some eight hours, and made a well-concerted retreat). In the retreat, by a strategic movement, Lieutenant Cooper effectually saved a detachment of wounded Connecticut soldiers, for which act the

Governor of Connecticut conferred upon Mr. Cooper the appointment referred to. 2nd Lieutenant Cooper was forthwith promoted to the 1st Lieutenancy and to the command of the Company, until the recovery of the Captain.

After spending some time in recruiting and re-organizing, he proceeded to Port Royal, and other places on the coast.

On the 10th May 1862, Mr. Cooper was promoted to the Captaincy in consequence of the retirement of the wounded Captain, and three days afterwards, whilst making an attack on the enemy on Stone Inlet, was surrounded with the detachment under his command, taken prisoner, and whilst in the hands of his captors a shell from the Federals burst over them, killing three of the captors and wounding Captain Cooper in the throat and neck; the remainder of the enemy fled and Captain Cooper is now in New York on furlough, and although the wounds are exceedingly painful, in a few days he will proceed again to join his regiment in time for the proposed attack on Charleston, South Carolina".

It seems a strange thing to do for a newly married man with three young children to volunteer to fight for a country to which, at the time, his ties were very slender. Sadly I have been unable to trace any service records, but we do know from the 1900 US Census that Henry had survived the war and at some time he had become a naturalised US citizen. At present

these records still have to be found.

Way back in 2004 I was alerted by my husband's first cousin-once-removed that a researcher had named Henry Poolly Cooper as one of his research interests. Following email contact, I found that Henry had settled in the State of Kansas and my attention was drawn to an 1885 publication of a History of Kansas, by William Cutler. A biographical sketch of Henry appears in this book which states that when Henry arrived in Kansas he tried farming for a year, before resuming the practise of his profession when he opened a law office in Waterville. These were the pioneering days of the early settlers, and Henry must have contributed in many ways to the developing prosperity of the United States following the Civil War. He remained in Kansas until August 1879, settling in Iuka. According to this biography, Henry held several important and lucrative positions. These included the position of Clerk to the Commissioner of Taxes in New York; Attorney to the city of Waterville; one of the Directors and Attorney for Marshall County; director of the Kansas Savings Bank and County Attorney of Pratt County. He was also an active Freemason.

Henry appears to have taken an active and leading role in the community affairs of the town of Iuka in Pratt County, Kansas, where he initially shared ownership of two of the local newspapers. Both papers were

Republican in their politics.

Sadly almost all of the 1890 US censuses are missing, but by the time the 1900 census was enumerated Henry and his family had moved to Denver, Colorado. This census helpfully records the year of entry to the United States; in Henry's case it was 1858 & Sarah arrived in 1864. Sarah's arrival in America was recorded as being three years prior to her eventual marriage to Henry, when his second wife Ellen was still alive. There are several anomalies in this census which leave many questions unanswered. In this census the two daughters are listed as single, but there is an official marriage certificate recording that Ellen Mary had married a Lewis Cass Thompson in Iuka on 19th May 1881. Lewis Thompson was briefly her father's partner in the newspaper company. Had the marriage failed and had Ellen returned to the family home? Was this brief association terminated when Ellen Mary's marriage collapsed? We shall never know. That same census recorded Charlotte Elizabeth's place of birth as New York – no doubt an easy misunderstanding by the enumerator, interpreting "York" as "New York". This census also records that the girls were Sarah Ann's daughters, but they were her step-daughters. As they were so young when their true mother died they had probably grown up believing that she was their flesh and blood mother. Henry's step-daughter, Louise Roberts had died in 1868.

There is no record of Henry on the 1910 US Census, which shows that Sarah Ann was a widow & that Charlotte was now the head of the household. Ellen Mary & she were the breadwinners as both were teaching in what were called "public schools", which were free in the same way that state schools are here in the UK. This led to a search for Henry's death and a helpful Archivist at the Colorado State Archives pointed me in the right direction, so that I was able to acquire his death certificate. He died on 27th September 1905 - the anniversary of Henry's second marriage to Ellen Scruton. The cause of death was given as "paralysis dementia" from which Henry had suffered for the previous eight years. My understanding of this phrase is that it was a euphemism for the third stage of syphilis. If this was the case Henry's family no doubt had many difficult times to contend with before he died.

—OOO—

Dealing with Poverty in 19th Century Eastern Sussex

Speaker: Mary Rudling

Family Roots meeting – Thursday, 5th May 2022

By: Jenny Wootton

Mary Rudling had done in depth research into poverty in eastern Sussex parishes, mostly around the Lewes and Brighton area, but she had looked at some in Eastbourne for this meeting.

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 (the 'New Poor Law') made major changes to the Old Poor Law regulations, giving the government more influence on how it was administered. Mary had compared the changes between 16 rural parishes around East Sussex and also St John-sub-Castro town parish in Lewes, to compare the differences between rural and urban relief.

The Act for Relief of the Poor 1601 (the 'Old Poor Law') gave every parish responsiblity for its own poor. Relief was distributed by an Overseer, either in the form of food, clothing or money, and he would also collect funds from the wealthy of the parish. Paupers could get relief from the parish where they were born, married or apprenticed, and if members moved away but needed support elsewhere they would be sent back to the parish where they were legally settled. Some parishes built poor houses to accommodate the elderly and infirm who could not fend for themselves.

By the early 19th century the need for poor relief in rural parishes was much greater as a result of poor harvests, low agricultural wages not keeping up with the cost of living, and the end of the Napoleonic Wars which meant there was much unemployment. In Wealden parishes as much as 50% of the population may have been in need of poor relief by 1820, but in downland parishes this was as low as 20%. Mary had

compared Rottingdean, a fairly well-to-do village, where only 12 families were receiving relief, with Laughton, a much more rural parish, where 139 paupers were being supported. In Eastbourne in 1832 there were few large farms and only two principle landowners. Between 1800 and 1832 the indoor poor numbered 40-60 individuals, and there were 65 to 140 households receiving outdoor relief, approximately 25% of the population.

Under the Old Poor Law system outdoor relief could be in the form of a small pension, but also food and clothing could be distributed, or rent could be paid; also a family could receive nursing care for the infirm, apprenticeships could be arranged or schooling paid for children; loans of money to buy tools, and work could be given to the able poor such as digging roads.

Labourers wages in the 18th century were 10s-12s per week, very low and barely enough to support a family. Sometimes children were sent out to work and could bring in extra income, or the family could take in a lodger to help pay the rent, or take in washing, keep a pig, pawn items to raise extra money, and also poaching and smuggling were rife. During the Napoleonic Wars the cost of farming became more expensive but wages did not increase and many families were plunged into poverty. This put pressure on the need for indoor relief and more poor houses were

built, not just for the elderly but also to house able-bodied poor who could not find work.

Under the Old Poor Law the relief officials were overseers, churchwardens and vestry members, who were mostly well-to-do farmers. Often those who paid for the relief were also the employers, and could control the decision about who should receive relief. John Ellman, overseer for Glynde at the end of the Old Poor Law, was a wealthy farmer. He was a strict disciplinarian and did not like his labourers to be too self-sufficient, but he provided well for them. On the other hand, Henry Pelham, 3rd Earl of Chichester, favoured allotments for the poor so they could provide food for themselves. He gave his workers more help than Ellman and was more sympathetic.

William Cobbett, a political journalist, spoke up in support of farm labourers. He wrote about the low wages, poor support with mass unemployment for men returning from the war, and dangerous working conditions of farm workers with the introduction of mechanised farm machinery. The worsening situation lead to protests across the farming community in the south east that became known as the Swing Riots of 1830, where threshing machines were destroyed and landowners were petitioned for higher wages.

As a result the Whig government set up a Royal Commission to look

into reforming the Poor Laws, which lead to the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 (the New Poor Law). It completely overhauled the old system and established a Poor Law Commission to oversee the national operation of the new system, aiming to reduce the amount of money spent on supporting the poor. Parishes were grouped together to form Poor Law Unions, who were responsible for maintaining workhouses to provide relief for the poor. In East Sussex there were six new Unions – Hailsham, Uckfield, Newhaven, West Firle, Lewes and Eastbourne. Outdoor relief was withdrawn and conditions were much stricter in the workhouse, men and women were housed separately, and no able-bodied person was allowed to claim money or assistance. Conditions in the workhouse were deliberately harsh and the diets poor to discourage people coming for relief. Able-bodied paupers were only given support for short periods of illness.

The New Poor Law was very unpopular and led to protests in Uckfield and Ringmer. Lewes Union objected to having any interference from government in the running of their workhouse.

After 1834 accommodation for the indoor poor was enlarged and smaller poor houses were sold to allow for the building of larger properties. Numbers did not greatly increase under the New Poor Law because paupers were often only indoors for short periods, in and out in a

few days, the able-bodied were only provided basic shelter and food to deter them seeking long term relief.

The workhouse was looked after by a Board of Guardians, who were responsible for appointing staff for the workhouse: master/mistress, nurses, school masters, porters, and also the outdoor staff: receiving officials, medical officer, auditor.

Men and women were housed separately, but some elderly couples were allowed to live together. Children were separated from their parents, and given basic schooling. Adults were expected to work while in the workhouse. Life in the workhouse was very monotonous, diets were poor and strict timetables were maintained. Indoor and outdoor poor complained to the Guardians and the Poor Law Commision about conditions, which led to more frequent inspections of workhouses.

The impact of the New Poor Law meant that spending on supporting the poor went down, the provision of outdoor relief also went down, and the workhouse became an option for everybody but not many wanted to take advantage because of the harsh conditions. The New Poor Law reduced the amount of poor rates for wealthy farmers, but the landowners objected to the regulations set by the government. In 1847 the Poor Law Commission was replaced by the Poor Law Board, which was administered by a parlimentary committee with the intention of providing

better accountability to Parliament. Workhouses and Boards of Guardians were finally abolished in 1930 following the Local Government Act of 1929.

—OOO—

The Life and Times of Samuel Williams, Village Labourer
Speaker: John Kay

Family Roots meeting – Thursday, 2nd June 2022

By: Jenny Wootton

Samuel Williams was a well-known character in 19th century Ringmer who lived all of his 80 years in the village, and rose from absolute poverty under the Old Poor Law system to build and own his own cottage on Ringmer Green. Although not one of John Kay's ancestors he decided to use original sources to find out as much as he could about Samuel's life and how it had developed over his lifetime.

Samuel, son of Samuel and Ann Williams, was baptised in Ringmer on 3 January 1802. Samuel senior had married Ann Blaber in Ringmer on 21 July 1799, both recorded as 'of this parish'. Blaber was a common name in Ringmer, but apart from their marriage and the baptisms of two children, John had been able to find no other reference to the Williams family in Ringmer. He had researched the 1802 overseer's rates and the

1803 militia list for the village but could not trace any history on Samuel senior or where he came from.

He turned his attention fo Samuel junior and found him next on the 1825 militia list for Ringmer, and then on the 1841 census and every Ringmer census thereafter until his death in 1884. On each census his occupation was given as labourer or farm labourer.

Ringmer was his parish of settlement and when he ever needed support he could turned to the overseer for financial help. A man acquired settlement by owning land in a parish, working as churchwarden or overseer, joining a new family as an apprentice when a teenager or as a servant. When a man got married and his bride came from another parish, his parish of settlement was the last place he had lived in for a year. He could be deported to his original parish if he became in need of parish relief. In Samuel's case, he was always accepted as a Ringmer resident.

Every Sussex parish had a social security system under the Old Poor Law, where the parish was required to meet the needs of the deserving poor for employment, when unable to work through illness or old age.

It would also provide health care, food, housing, clothing, fuel and household equipment where needed, as well as funeral expenses when a parishioner died.

The Ringmer poor house was built in 1733 and demolished in 1873. Samuel may have spent his early childhood there as John could find no records of his parents. As a teenager he was 'put out' by the parish to work on farms in Ringmer, first to Broyle Place Farm for four years, and then on two other farms until he reached twenty-one years.

Samuel married Mary Yates at St Anne's church in Lewes on 18 February 1822, claiming to be 'of this parish'. Their eldest son was baptised in the same church three months later. Parishes tried to avoid bastardy, and if a pregnant female could swear who the father was then his parish was responsible and he was asked to pay £40 for a 'laying-in fee' if he was not willing to marry, and if he was unable to pay the fee he would be sent to debtor's prison. Mary Yates came from a traveller family and was baptised in Blatchington, Sussex in 1802. Her father lived in a caravan, and served in the Sussex militia early in the Napoleonic Wars. Samuel and Mary had eight children, all baptised in Ringmer, but one daughter and one son died in infancy.

After the battle of Waterloo in 1815 life changed in Ringmer village, as men returned from the war looking for work and food could be imported more easily. Farmers and traders had prospered during the war. Wages were kept low, food was subsidised, families spent all their wages on food and the poor were kept by the parish. Poor rates soared but prosperous

farmers flourished, and parish life between the wealthy and the poor became more unequal.

Through the 1820s men without daily work were employed by the parish, including Samuel Williams, and put to breaking stones for road building. Samuel was also employed by the Sussex militia at this time. The beadle was put in charge of the parish labourers, who were formed into labour gangs specialising in road building. The Ringmer road gang built the new turnpike road from Ringmer to Lewes in fourteen weeks.

Life in Ringmer saw a lot of crime in those impoverished times – poaching, drunken assaults, theft of food and firewood were mostly petty crimes. More serious crimes such as sexual assaults, burglary and arson carried the death sentence, but often this was not carried out. The first offence incurred a few weeks in jail, and further offences usually lead to transportation. Members of the Ringmer road gang were heavily involved in some of these crimes, including John Trigwell, John Dyball and Thomas Oliver, but in 1826-27 the gang was broken up when Richard Brown, one of the members, turned King's evidence. Two of those involved were James and Henry Blaber, two of Samuel's uncles.

The Swing Riots of 1830-31 saw farm labourers across the south protesting against the introduction of modern machinery taking their jobs and the demand for higher wages, and many farmers were thinking of

giving up. Ringmer had about a dozen farmers, including Lord Gage, and half a dozen tradesmen in the Vestry, and about 200 farm labourers. The riots were successful and farm labourers got an increase in their wages, which helped Samuel and his family, but members of the Vestry were not pleased. More constables were created to keep order and after a few weeks wages were cut back again. There was unrest in the country and six men in Tolpuddle, Dorset, founded a friendly society to protest again the lowering of farm wages. At the same time Ringmer farm labourers went on strike, but this was broken up and the ringleaders were put in prison for a few weeks, including Samuel.

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 saw a major reform of the law and only gave relief to poor families by putting them into the workhouse. The Poor Law Union paid labourers in flour rather than money, which led to a revolt and the ring leaders were imprisoned for 8 months. Families could not manage under the new rules, and many young children died of starvation. A report on Samuel Williams appeared in the local paper in 1839 when he and another man found a woman floating in the village pond. It was a very cold winter and the parish was ordered to make soup for the poor, including Samuel and his family. Some years later Samuel had geese and goslings stolen from his cottage. He met two men from the road gang who were thought to have stolen them but nothing could be proved.

From the records John had found Samuel living in a cottage facing Ringmer Green in 1823. In 1838 he was living at Ashton Green, south of Ringmer, but in 1844 he had moved back to Ringmer Green. Samuel built Diamond Cottage on land previously owned by his father-in-law John Yates, who had acquired it by squatting there in his caravan for a number of years. Samuel took out a mortgage of £80 with the brickmaker Henry Turner in 1858, to build the cottage. He kept it until 1871 and then sold the cottage to Henry Turner for £105. The cottage still survives in Ringmer.

In 1881, after his wife Mary had died, Samuel moved in with this daughter Ellen Trigwell, who also lived in Ringmer. Samuel became a well-known character in the village, where he was affectionately known as "Duke" Williams. He died in 1884 and is buried in Ringmer churchyard, but his grave is not marked. Six of his eight children reached adulthood and all lived in the village. He was surrounded by his family when he died, and was survived by 30 grandchildren, and some of his descendants still live in the village today.

—OOO—

A bit of a Poor Law theme in this edition ed.

Orphan Certificates

We have a number of unwanted certificates for sale. This is the list for Deaths. We also have Birth and Marriage certificates all at £2.00 plus p&p.
Please head over to our website for the full collection. In the February edition we had the list of Birth certificates with the Marriage certificates in the May edition.

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BAKER	Wiltshire
BALLARD	Surrey
BANNER	Warwick
BARKER	Drowned in a pool of water
BATES	London
BAXTER	Yorkshire
BEARMAN	Uxbridge
BEDFORD	Wakefield
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BERRY	London
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LEES	Oldham
LEES	Rochdale
LEES	Yorkshire
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LEWIS	Wiltshire

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MINNS	Essex
MOORE	Sussex
MORRISH	Essex
MORRISH	Leicester
MORRISH	London
MULVANEY	London
NIGHTINGALE	Kent
NORRIS	Wiltshire
O'SULLIVAN	Chadwell Heath
OLDHAM	Cheshire
OLDHAM	Chester
PERKS	Worcestershire
PHILLIPS	Liverpool
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ROBERTS	Anglesey
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RODGERS	Hull
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ROWE	Suffolk
ROWE	Swansea.

SALMON	Essex
SALT	Warwickshire
SCHERR	Surrey
SHAW	Nottingham
SHEEHAN	Bristol
SHEPHERD	Bolton
SHEPHERD	Rochdale
SIDDALL	Chester
SIDDALL	Lancashire
SKUSE	Middlesex
SMITH	London
STEVENS	Kent
STOTT	Rochdale
TAYLOR	Manchester
TAYLOR	Portsmouth
TAYLOR	Wales
THOMAS	Glamorgan
THOMAS	Swansea
THOMAS	Wales
TILBURY	Middlesex
VOISEY	Surrey
WAGSTAFFE	Southampton
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WATTS	Kent
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WILLIAMS	Rochdale
WILLIAMS	Sussex
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Showing parishes for "Family Roots" local research.

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