

FAMILY TREE OF KATHLEEN BRENDA BARNARD, nee MAW

Introduction

About twelve years ago, I started searching for the family's ancestry, and spent many contented hours consulting records in various parts of England. Being a realist, my attitude was not to hope for any revelations of importance, but just to complete the picture as far as I could.

This account has two purposes- One, to try and put into some sort of order all the relevant information I was able to gather from various records. The other, to give some account, which of course is a very personal view, of the people I knew, and the kind of lives they led.

We have just returned from the Dordogne, I having broken my leg on the first night of our holiday. The unexpected prospect of an immobile six weeks stretching out before me seems an ideal opportunity for me to complete my task.

Reigate, June 1st 1990

[The original typed pages include here a map of England pointing out the locations of Hessle and Godmanchester, and more detailed maps of each one, showing the surrounding villages.]

BEFORE MY TIME

My Father's Family

About five miles west of the busy sea-port of Kingston-upon-Hull lies the small town of Hessle. It is situated on the river Humber and on the main road leading across and linking it to northern towns like Leeds and Bradford, as well as all the roads running south. The area is very flat and bleak, and life must have been a grim struggle in the days before all our modern conveniences were invented.

It was here that the Maw family, my father's ancestors, lived and died. Until my father's generation, they seemed reluctant to move far in spite of the hardships; and even then his youngest sister Alice stayed in the neighbourhood all her life until she died in 1980 at the age of 82.

The first census records, taken in June 1841, show Hessle, including the nearby hamlets, as having about three thousand inhabitants altogether, with just over one thousand living in Hessle itself. From this census I discovered my great great grandmother, Ann Maw, a widow aged 50. She was a toll collector on the main road in Hessle at Southgate with her "Ag. lab." sons, Robert and William.

Close neighbours, also living in Southgate, were John Speck aged 35, wheelwright, with his wife Elizabeth and five children. They were also to become great great grandparents when their eldest daughter Mary married Robert Maw eight years later. Their marriage certificate from All Saints' Parish Church, Hessle, revealed that Robert's father had been called John, so he must have been widow Ann's husband.

Maw and Speck surnames occur quite frequently in the records, and many people were no doubt related. For instance, there was a Robert - and wife Sarah - Speck, beerhouse keeper aged 65. He may have been John Speck's father, especially as John became a publican in later life, but I have no proof of this.

There was also a Thomas Speck and his wife living in nearby Swanland, again keeping a toll-bar, and also making shoes. There were more Maws around here too. Already the occupations to do with machine- and implement-making, brewing and toll-bar keeping, have become apparent, and appeared again later in both families. Their work would have led them into contact with each other, and in a small rural community with few amusements, it would be natural for them to turn to each other for companionship as well as advice.

Incidentally, Robert was a Christian name common to both families, and it was also chosen for my father. Perhaps one day someone in a future generation may think of reviving the tradition.

Census records are taken at ten-year intervals, and I looked forward with excitement to see what had happened to them all by March 1851.

As already mentioned, Robert Maw had married Marianne, as she now called herself, on March 17th 1849 in All Saints' Church, Hessle. Two years later, they were now living at 121 either Cow Lane or Blacksmith Street. Robert was now styled keeper of the toll-bar, possibly having taken over the job from his mother, whose name no longer appeared.

Living at number 113, four doors away; was Marianne's family. Her father, John Speck, was now a machine maker and wheelwright, although the marriage certificate had described him more modestly as a blacksmith. He must have had some skill and progressed fairly well nevertheless, since his eldest son, another Robert now aged 20, was working with him, as were two more apprentices in their late teens. There were also four additional children in his family, making nine in total, the youngest arriving in 1848.

The only other entry of interest was old Sarah Speck, now 64 and a beerhouse keeper, so she must have continued the business when her husband died.

Shortly after this time, Robert and Marianne took a bold step by moving to Boston, Lincs. where their first child, William Henry, my grandfather, was born on July 31st 1852. Again, Robert's occupation was toll-bar keeper, so it may be that a more lucrative toll-bar induced such recklessness, especially with a family on the way and more mouths to feed. This may well have been the reason for the mistaken legend related in the family when we were young, that our ancestors came from Boston. However, they only stayed there for about four years. It was probably only a temporary arrangement, because although a second child was born during this period, the two children were not christened until they were back again in Hessle in 1856, when John Robert was born and all three were christened at the same time in Hessle Parish Church.

The 1861 census appeared in the April and both families were luckily traced. Robert was now a carter, and there were two more children, aged 3 and eight months.

Marianne's parents were still living nearby in Railway Street, and John Speck was now making threshing machines and implements. His son, the other Robert, was still living at home and working with his father and so was William Sellars, a nineteen-year-old apprentice.

Old Sarah Speck had moved to North Street, and, at the age of 73, no longer worked.

A George Maw had moved into Cow Lane and was a brewer. He could have taken over from Sarah when she retired unless there was more than one drinking establishment in the Lane. George and his wife registered five children.

By the time the 1871 census was taken there were many more Maws and Specks, and they were moving either into or out of the adjoining villages. This is very inconvenient for record researchers, because unless addresses are known, there is no way of telling which reels to look through. It would take months to go through every street in the hope of finding names. It would also be a great strain on the eyesight because the quality of the writing is often very faint.

Unfortunately Robert and Marianne were not found this time so they must have moved further away. It would almost certainly have been either to somewhere in Hessle itself or to a nearby village. There was a new village at Cottingham where other Maws lived. My father was born there some years later, and I remember the name being mentioned in the days of my youth.

I was fascinated to see the name of Maw scattered among these indexes so liberally. Having been brought up in the south of England, I was under the impression that it was extremely rare everywhere. It certainly seems that all the antecedents came from this northern area of the country.

John and Elizabeth Speck were now living in Preston Gate. John was still making machinery, now helped by another son, William, and grandson John Thomas, a sixteen-year-old apprentice. Amelia Thomas, grand-daughter and thirteen-year-old scholar, was also living in the same house. John had also become a publican. Robert Speck now lived next door, married and with three children, and had turned his hand to boat-building. Another son of John, and also a machine-maker called Henry, lived further down the road with his wife and six children.

Also in Preston Gate lived a black and white smith, with an apprentice John Maw. So the two families made a considerable contribution to the community by making and repairing equipment. John Speck appears to have been the leading light, and probably taught himself his trade.

The line of research into my Granny Maw's side of the family took a different course. It was also to prove very limited. The few addresses in my possession led nowhere. Her parents apparently moved fairly often, which was fairly common in those days of

rented accommodation, and the census records were useless because other people had moved in. They lived in the outskirts of Hull, so it would have been rather like looking for a needle in a haystack to try and trace them in one of the many streets. Granny's birth certificate, issued at Sutton, Sculcoates, denotes her birth on 24th August 1860 at 14 Cuthbert Street, Hull. Her father, James Miller, was a journeyman joiner, and her mother's maiden name, Sarah Ackerill. They had three other children, and my grandmother Ernma was the youngest. It may have been through her father that she met William Henry Maw, because he also was a joiner.

From this information it was possible to trace the marriage of her parents at Holy Trinity Church, Hull, in 1848, James Miller and Sarah Ackrell, living in St. James' Street and Edgar Street respectively, gave their fathers' names as James Miller, gardener, and the late Abel Ackrell, cordwainer, or shoemaker. So I had discovered two more great great grandparents. Cordovan, incidentally, is a finely-processed leather made originally in Cordoba, Spain, and was presumably used in making footwear of a superior quality.

THE OTHER SIDE

My mother's maiden name was Apps, and nothing about her antecedents was known to any of us. Her father, John William, died when she was 3, and other relatives were never mentioned.

John, a silversmith's assistant, married my grandmother Martha Francis when he was 25 and she 21, I was to learn from the marriage certificate, at St. Alfege Church, Greenwich, on 18th May 1891. Also that his father Robert was a builder. This all seemed very helpful and gave no hint of the difficulties which lay ahead.

Armed with this information, I turned to the birth registers, but unfortunately there appeared no John William in the appropriate year. Had his parents broken the law by not registering his birth, or could he have given false information about his age, I wondered? Following up all the Johns and Williams and John Williams for five years on either side of 1866, by sending for numerous certificates in the hope that his age was incorrect, I eliminated them all and there was no-one who fitted the rest of my scanty information.

There proved to be a Robert Apps, builder, married to Susannah Gillham at St. George the Martyr, Southwark, living at the time of the 1861 and the 1871 census, at 845 Old Kent Road, near New Cross. They had six children. So far, all was well, everything fitted, but the blow came when John William's name did not appear as one of the children.

This followed the discovery that his death coincided with a census year - 1901. For a special fee - these records are not normally released for a hundred years - I managed to trace him to Charing Cross Hospital, where he had been transferred from Lewisham Hospital a few months before he died. It gave his place of birth as New Cross, London; I had found another clue.

So far, there is no absolute proof of John William's lineage.

Perhaps one day I shall find the missing link.

It was a special pleasure to turn to my grandmother's family. Born Martha Francis, we called her Nana, and she always showed us great kindness, so that we loved going to stay with her. She was closer to us than the northern relations whom we rarely saw, Nana was born in Godmanchester, Huntingdon, on September 5th 1870 to John and Susan Francis, nee Wilson. Both parents were country people, who stayed close to where their forefathers had been for generations. This made all the records easy to follow, although because everyone worked on the land, there was little information available on how they lived.

My visit to the area showed a very pleasant, rural part of England, dominated by the beautiful River Ouse, running through meadowlands. Hartford, where the Wilsons lived, is particularly attractive, being a village about a mile from Godmanchester and full of lovely old thatched cottages. Understandably, it has become a favourite among prosperous commuters. It is still very peaceful, yet the wide river makes an ideal pleasure ground for boating activities, and expensive-looking craft are scattered around. It is easy to understand why the ancestors were in no hurry to leave such idyllic surroundings.

John Francis was born in Godmanchester in 1834, and married Susan Wilson at Hartford Parish Church in 1857, where both were then living in London Road. By 1861 they had moved into Godmanchester, a small town, there producing eight children, of whom Martha was the youngest. John progressed to working in the big flour mill and later became a miller. There are still fine, old water-mills along the river, and the large one at Godmanchester where John probably worked is very well preserved, and has been converted into a private dwelling. In the 1871 census their address was quoted as 184 Pipers Lane.

Thomas, John's father, was found, in the 1861 census, living in London Street, Godmanchester. He had been born in Houghton, another village about a mile eastwards along the river. His wife, Lucy, was born in Shoreditch, London. More great great grandparents.

It was possible to go back a further generation through the parish registers of Wyton, or Wytton, a nearby hamlet, where Thomas and his brothers and sisters were baptised. Their father was another John Francis.

They all appear to have worked on the land, there being few other occupations available. A glance at the family tree will fill in more detail.

Martha's mother, Susan Wilson, came from a similar background to her husband. She was born in 1836 in Hartford, the pretty village, and had five brothers and sisters. All the menfolk worked on the land. Her father, John, came from Hartford and married

Susanna from Titchmarsh, Northamptonshire. More great great grandparents! He lived in the village all his life like most of the family and was buried there in 1875, aged 81. His father was another John, being born and buried likewise in Hartford, and lived from 1756 to 1832. He married Elizabeth Leding of the same parish in 1780, Neither was able to write and substituted marks instead of signatures in the register.

It was a surprise to find that I had had sixteen great great grandparents, not to mention thirty two great great great grandparents. It was really that I had never thought about things that far back.

It brought to mind the fact that quite an enormous number of people contribute to our creation, and I wonder where my various quirks and characteristics were developed. Would we have recognised ourselves in our ancestors? How far have they fixed our destinies before we start in this World? And how would we have coped with the privations and hardships that they each had to live with in their time?