



Chapter Nine

England Ancestors & families

Earlier Ancestors

The earliest West records come from the late 1600s. Tracing “West” ancestry earlier than James (b. 1690) becomes increasingly difficult, since in Medieval times family names were not used among the common people (yes, we are “commoners”), and when such names evolved from the 16th century onward, they were frequently place names: Newton of Letcombe, Aldworth (from the village of Aldworth), West, (from the West country) and so on. I noted with amusement the names of the coauthors of the Blewbury town history: Peter East and Roy Northeast. It is interesting to note that although we were commoners, we were an independent lot (the official term is “non-conformist”) from a religious standpoint, more likely to attend a Strict Baptist Chapel or a United Reformed Church, than a Church of England.

The Earliest Generations

The Wests: for several generations were from the East Hagbourne area of Berkshire:

James West 1690-1772 & Catherine Shippon 1698-1763

Daniel West 1728-1802 & Sarah Keate 1732-1793

James West 1757-1817 & Mary Walters

James West 1789-1857 & Mary Bearfield 1798-1827 Susanna Witherall Street 1798-69

In the parish records of East Hagbourne, there is an entry under baptisms in the year 1789: “James, son of James and Mary”. This is confirmed by Mary Irish’s family history memories which has a “James” West (b. 1757) as father of James (b.1789)

The Aldworths: a family of builders, likely came from the town of Aldworth in the 16th century. Even earlier, family historian Philip Hope remembers an Aldworth family story which tells of ancestors coming over with William the Conqueror in 1066. The earliest traceable (Thomas) Aldworth was born in 1475 (possibly in the town of Aldworth) and died at Lockinge (3 miles from Wantage) in 1515. At that time, the parish records of Wantage (Wantyng) begin



William Aldworth b. 1818

to “swell” with the ranks of Aldworths. There are records of 10 wills of a family of Aldworths (tanners) at Priors Hold (near East Hanney) between 1500 & 1700. In 1925, Philip Aldworth West (our Uncle Phil) visited England, and Jack Ireson remembers driving him as a young boy to visit “Uncle John” in Brightwalton. This was possibly Sarah’s brother John, retired from Nottingham. He would have been 70 years of age. Jack Ireson remembers Jack West and Phil’s subsequent visit in 1981 and a visit to Brightwalton to inquire about an uncle (John would have died many years earlier). Mary Irish believes that John died in Nottingham, and indeed, that’s where he is buried, but perhaps he retired to and died in Brightwalton, but was buried back in Nottingham.

Another family story is that a branch of the Aldworth family lived in Ireland. I have recently found, in the British Peerage, a succession of Richard Aldworths between 1629 and 1899 in County Cork, Ireland, there being no other concentrations of that family name in Ireland. Richard Aldworth, Gentleman, was born in Wantage in 1546 and his ancestors Richard Aldworth I, II and III are all listed as MPs. In the 16th century, MPs were a type of noble and therefore eligible for Irish land grants (Google “Plantations of Ireland”) - not the English at their best, from the Irish perspective. Sarah told stories of going to visit “titled” relatives there, and Edna remembers Grandma Emma saying that mother-in-law Sarah was always aware of her connection to Irish nobility. William Aldworth (born in Wantage in 1591) appears later in life at County Cork Ireland as an aristocrat land holder. Sarah was born in 1845 in Wantage and a contemporary, John Aldworth in Cork, was born in 1832. Putting genealogy together with family verbal history would suggest that they were distant cousins and probably the family which Sarah visited.

The Smiths: William Smith, Jane Westell’s (b.1815) grandfather, lived at Garlands Farm. A family story has his initials carved on a table there. Garlands Farm was later settled by WWW’s brother Daniel West (b. 1856), and his descendants lived there until the farm was sold in 2015. Peter & Joe West still live on a portion of the original property. William had a cousin Percy Smith who “by his will” in 1884 bequeathed 5,000 pounds for the establishment and maintenance of a cottage hospital for Wantage and neighbourhood, including particularly East Hanney and Letcombe Basset. There is reportedly a plaque in the hospital commemorating these gifts. I visited Garlands



United Reformed Church, Aston Tirrold



Farm, with Brenda in 1994 and Muriel in 2005. It is a beautiful old farmhouse which has been refurbished by the new (non family-member) owner.

THE SECOND GENERATION

James West 1789-1857 was born at East Hagbourne and after marrying Mary, moved to Aston Tirrold, where according to United Reformed Church records, a daughter Ann died in infancy in 1817. The parish records tell us that his son Daniel (our ancestor)

was born in 1813 and a son William in 1815 (dying in 1829). The birth of subsequent siblings are recorded at Blewbury, where the family moved after 1817: John (b.1818) and Martha (b.1820 who had an “illegitimate” daughter Elizabeth in 1840), Joseph (b.1823) and James (1825-1827). The death of father James’ first wife Mary was recorded in that same year, 1827. As the family grew, the increasingly cramped quarters of the mill must have been relieved by an extension. Daniel’s stepmother was a widow, Susannah Street, née Witherall (b.1798) who brought two sons into the family. They had a daughter Susannah (b. 1831) and another son “James” who died in infancy.

William Westell 1778-1869 was a prosperous saddle and harness maker in Steventon. His wife Christian died in 1817, and his second wife in 1845. This was the main reason that his daughter Jane stayed in Steventon after the marriage to Daniel, while Daniel “commuted” to work at mills in Hanney and later in Grove. William’s land was usurped by the Great Western Railroad in the 1830s. Later, his grandson WWW was involved in a legal dispute over these lands.

George (b. 1771) and Mary Whiting: There is a family story that George Whiting signed away his inheritance to “false friends” while “under the influence”, greatly diminishing the family’s fortune.

George (b. ca. 1790) and Lydia Long: This branch of the family may have lived at Chalgrove and Stadhampton, Oxfordshire, until the end of the 19th century, when they moved to East Hanney and then to the manor house at Garford.

THE THIRD GENERATION

Daniel West (b. 1813) must have had a difficult time after the death of his mother Mary and his infant brother James in 1827, followed by the death of his 14 year old brother in 1829 and his father James’s re-marriage to Susannah. Daniel apparently didn’t get on with his step-brothers. One story tells of him glueing the hair of one of them to a bed-post as he slept. Daniel left Blewbury Mill sometime after 1830 to go to Abingdon, where he met Jane. The

next record we have of him is the 1841 census which puts him with his new bride Jane and her father in Steventon. The 1851 census shows him at Hine's Mill in Grove as "a lodger" as the family was still in Steventon. In 1881 the census shows him at Hine's (Upper Grove) Mill with Jane and his grandson (William Westell West's eldest son) Will, his own children having grown and moved on. He is buried with Jane in the Grove Chapel churchyard.

Jane Westell (b. 1815), from Steventon, was originally engaged to marry a "gentleman of means". After going to Abingdon Chapel with her father and meeting Daniel, she decided it was right to give up the wealthy worldly gentleman to marry "Christian", Daniel. Not surprisingly, Jane's father William Westell was offended by Jane's decision to marry "chapel-going Daniel". Percy (b. 1877) remembers his grandmother Jane as a Lady with lovely hands. Jane and Daniel lived in Abingdon for a short time after they were married. As a father, Daniel was very strict. He would not allow the girls to have dolls, as his fundamentalist religion forbade "graven images". Jane's step-mother died in 1845, and her father insisted

(even though he had two other daughters who could do it) that Jane look after the house in Steventon. As a result, Daniel had to work during the week at Hanney Lower Mill and later at Hine's Mill in Grove, returning on weekends to Steventon, where most of the family including William Westell West (b.1847) were born.

William Aldworth (b. 1818) married Emma Whiting in 1842. Family tradition has it that the Aldworth & Whiting families were originally quite well-to-do. As a girl, Emma had her own ponies. Emma died fairly young in 1857. William re-married to Mary Ann Piggot.

Susannah West (b. 1831) married Henry Prior (b.1825), (illegitimate) son of John Prior in 1852. He and his sons ran the Blewbury Mill into the early 20th century. A daughter, Rachael (b. 1865), lived at the mill until 1956. The census of 1861 shows Henry at



Jane Westell b.1815



Rachael Prior at Old Blewbury Mill 1956

age 36, Susannah at 30, and mother in law Susanna (Witherall b. 1798) at the mill. Mary Irish tells of a "lovely visit" with her father Percy to "Miss Prior" (Rachael) before she died.

The Fourth Generation

William Westell West & Sarah Aldworth (see Chapter 2)

Daniel J. West, (b. 1856) WWW's brother, married Catherine Lay, who died early at age 37. The family lived and worked at the Hanney Mill in East Hanney. A family story tells of a rift between them and the Venn Mill family, one mill diverting water so that the downstream mill could not operate. The rift seems to have continued, as I have a newspaper article of a lawsuit by Grampa John against Daniel in 1904 regarding unpaid debts of some sort. Around the turn of the century, Daniel retired from milling after dust affected his health. He began farming at Garlands Farm in West Challow as a tenant farmer, founding a dynasty of 4 generations of Wests there. Charlie (Henry C) West, one of Daniel's sons, emigrated to Canada, running the Bird's Eye Cove marina at Maple Bay, B.C. for a time before dying in the veteran's hospital in Victoria in the early 80's. At some point Daniel was injured by a Great Western Railway train and was in court several times seeking redress from the railroad. This is perhaps the court case in which his brother William Westell West is reported to have participated against the railway – though it was more likely pertaining to the land of his mother Jane in Steventon, which had been expropriated by the Great Western Railway.

Roseamelia West (Shepherd), (b. 1853) WWW's sister, married Martin Shepherd, living and raising a large family in West Hanney. They had a bakery next to St. James Church in West Hanney. Apparently his delivery route was a small, local one.



Roseamelia and Martin Shepherd and their large family

Philip & Harriet Long (Grampa John's "in-laws") The Long family seem to have come from Chalford and Stadhampton in Oxfordshire, not appearing on the census rolls of Gar-



ford or Hanney area until the census of 1881, which lists Philip and Harriet Long, with family Charles at 10 years of age, George (6), Emma (Grandma West) (4), Florence (2), Alice (1), and Nellie (10 months). Philip was a baker and coal merchant “who baked old-fashioned top-and-bottom loaves, usually burnt black but crusty and very sweet. They were so popular that his round went out to Lyford and Southmoor”. They were probably members of the West Hanney Church, as their prominent gravestones indicate. They appear to have deferred to the West family’s Strict Baptist tradition in allowing the wedding of their daughter to Grampa to take place outside of

their church. Grampa and Gramma’s wedding certificate says “Grove Particular Baptist Chapel”. Judging from Gramma and Grampa’s trips to England (1927 & 1937), the Longs were the most visited England families. We have many photos of the families of Gramma Emma’s siblings on the website: <http://brucemore.ca/west/gramma-emma-family-the-longs-bryants-iresons/>

Mr. & Mrs. William Long (b. 1847) (Philip’s brother) were another prosperous family in the area. They had the Manor Farm which has a chapel in the farmyard in Garford Village. Venn Mill is one mile away over fields in which there is an ancient barrow (burial mound). Percy remembers Mr. Long as a kindly man who gave grand suppers for many friends and family at the end of the harvest. Enid Ireson remembers stories of soirées given in a large room in the Garford Manor. Eva Neville, who married George Long, and their daughter Mabel, were gifted performers and musicians, who performed at these events, Mabel being particularly skilled at elocution. Several of the Vancouver family kept in contact with Mabel until she died in 1970, notably my mom Elsie and Aunt Marjorie.

England Relatives of Today

West, Aldworth, Smith Long, Bryant, Prowting, Ireson etc.

Several members of the family have visited our England relatives over the years. Of course all of them would have met Mary Irish at one point during their trip and many met her when she came to BC. In 1969, I visited Mary and many of our England relatives including Uncle Percy (Grove); Billy & Joan Smith (Grove) - and later, their family: Colin and Barbara, Helen and Roger, Richard & Sheila, Roger & Pam (see chapter 11); Herbert & Doris Smith (Wantage); Brenda West (Garlands Farm) and recently, through the kuzzins trips to England in 2012 and 2015, several of us have had the pleasure of meeting the Garlands Farm Wests: Muriel, Susan, Elisabeth, Rosemary, Peter and Joe and many others at the Bridge Farm Ancestor’s Day. At a 2012 reception hosted by Mi-



Billy & Joan Smith with Molly

chael & Ela Ireson, I also met Long family descendants Christine Jordan and Rebecca Harris, and I’ve also had the pleasure of meeting and corresponding with several family genealogy “freaks”: Helen Willemsen (Holland), Rebecca Harris, Helen Barker, Jackie Cooper and Timothy Barker (Crowter family).



sharing family history with the Banfields & Bryants in Wiltshire

In 1969, I visited Joyce and Bill Prowting (Harrow) and later their children, Susan and James; and in Wiltshire: Eleanor, Phil and Jack Bryant (Stowford, Trowbridge). Later I visited Phil Jr. and Jack’s daughter Pat Banfield, with their grandchildren Robert Bryant Pearson and Robert and Brian Banfield. We also visited Audrey & Keith Long (Falkland, Bath) and later their daughter Sally. In Didcot, we connected with Jack and Enid Ireson and later their nephew Eric and his wife Ela. See description of the Kuzzins’ visit in Chapter 11.

