

John & Sarah Newport (née Spicer) *(1809-1882) & (1806-1880)* *(my great-great-grandparents)*

While there is very little doubt that my great-great-grandmother, Sarah Spicer, was actually *born* in 1806, when, where, and even if, she was baptised is not so certain. She says, in later censuses, that she was born in Reculver (Kent), and the simple calculation of subtracting her age from the date of the census, makes her year of birth, 1806. Her baptism should, therefore, appear in the parish registers of the only church in Reculver, St. Mary's, but there is no such record for 1806 or for many years either side. So, what happened? It's possible that she wasn't baptised at all, or that she was, but elsewhere. With very little documentation to be found concerning the ordinary, every-day person at that time, it is important to find anything that does exist. So, I had to keep searching, or come up with a good reason to stop.

I must admit my first thoughts were that the Spicer family history, which I had just started, would have to come to a sudden, premature end. I began to wonder whether I had found the right Richard Spicer. Perhaps, there was another one, not far away who had had a daughter, called Sarah. I decided, however, that, instead of giving up so easily and so early, it might be better to re-examine what I knew of Sarah and her family.

The first fact to be checked was that Sarah was a daughter of Richard Spicer and Elizabeth Jane Coombes who were married at St. Martin's church, Herne, on Saturday, December 13th. 1800.

There were two possible errors - either I had the wrong child, or I had the wrong parents. Therefore, I looked at all the baptism entries, which I had extracted from the parish registers, for children of Richard and Elizabeth Spicer, between 1800 and 1813. What I had I have listed below.

- 1801 September 23rd. Elizabeth Jane
- 1803 September 4th. Henry
- 1806 November 23rd. Elizabeth
- 1809 December 29th. Jane Elizabeth

Henry, I could obviously forget! Elizabeth Jane was buried in 1808, and Jane Elizabeth married a Stephen Cottew in 1835. That left an Elizabeth, born in exactly the right year to be my great great grandmother. There was no Sarah.

It didn't take too long, however, to realise that there were too many Elizabeths. In 1806, the first Elizabeth Jane was still alive, so it was extremely unlikely that the parents would have given a second daughter the same Christian name. There are many instances, in the registers, of children being given the same name as a sister or brother who had died before they were born, but never to my knowledge while the sibling was still alive!

Could there have been an error in the recording of the details? Perhaps, the vicar made the entry in the register later, after the ceremony, and confused the mother's and the daughter's Christian names. After all, I don't suppose that neither Richard nor Elizabeth would have had reason, or the nerve, to have asked the vicar if they might see the entry, even if we assume that either could read.

Therefore, as far as I was concerned, it was more than a possibility that this Elizabeth was, in fact, our Sarah.

Now, what about the parents? Did I have the right ones?

Well, as far as I have found, there were certainly no other Richard and Elizabeth Spicers getting married, having children, or being buried, during this period of time, nor in any of the surrounding parishes. This, alone, seemed proof enough but further proof came from several sources.

The censuses of 1841 and 1851 proved the relationship between our John, his wife Sarah, and the Spicer family.

The relationship was, later, confirmed beyond any reasonable doubt when I came across the headstone for John and Sarah, in St. Martin's Churchyard, Herne. But, I'm getting ahead of myself. See later, toward the end of this story, for what it was that I found.

There is one further piece of evidence of which I wasn't aware until many years after I had all ready decided that I had found correct Sarah. This, I feel, proves the argument.

As I mentioned earlier, Jane Elizabeth Spicer married a Stephen Cottew, in 1833. In a scrapbook, which my grandfather started in 1890, he has pasted two pieces of paper. One is a single sheet of a letter written to him from a Rose Cottew, and posted on 26th January, of that same year. A second scrap, cut from the bottom of another letter, bears only the signature, 'Rose Cottew'. My grandfather, obviously uncertain of the true relationship has written, along-side the name, the words 'a cousin?'. Rose, the granddaughter of Stephen, was in fact, grandfather's second cousin - that is if we accept that the baptism of Elizabeth Spicer, who never was, was really the baptism of our Sarah, who never seems to have had one!

However, great-great-grandmother hadn't finished yet. As though to confuse the situation further, Sarah Spicer's place of birth was given, in both the 1851 and 1861 censuses as 'Reculver', but then in the 1871, as 'Broomfield, Herne'. Why the change? Well, perhaps she thought that she was being more accurate, but she was in fact only half-right. As I found out much later, she was, it is true, born in an area known as 'Broomfield' that actually straddles the border between the two parishes of Reculver and Herne. The mistake was, therefore, understandable, as the boundary line between the two parishes, ran right down the centre of the lane that fronted their house. She only had to walk about six feet from her front gate, which was in the parish of Reculver, to be in Herne. The map below (Fig. 1) shows the rough position, and size, of the farm, and indicates the parish boundary line.

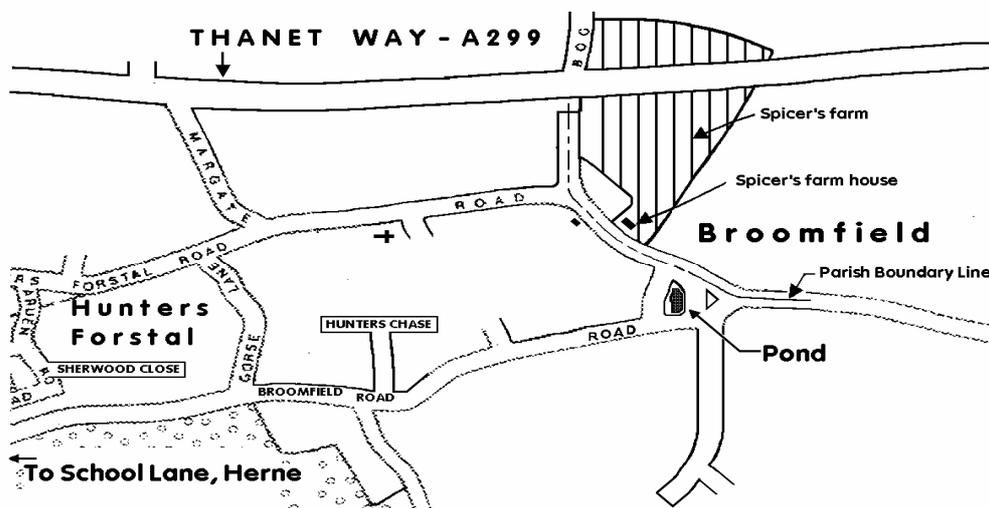


Fig 1. Map of Herne/Broomfield showing the position of Spicer's Farm

Because Broomfield is only a very small, rural area, I thought it possible that I might be able to find where Sarah had been born. A gentleman, living in Herne Bay - someone who my wife and I had known for many years - was, once again, of great help. Having spent many years researching the local history, and some of the family histories, of both Herne and Herne Bay, he came up with a map showing a farm and farmhouse, which he said was owned by Henry Spicer, Sarah's grandfather, back in the late 1700's and early 1800's. It was, for many years, known locally as Spicer's Farm. Richard Spicer, Sarah's father, was almost certainly

born on the farm, and it is just as certain that Sarah was. I knew, when I saw the map that I had to go to Broomfield to see, and if possible photograph this house.

One Saturday, my wife, and I, took a drive over to Herne Bay and using the map found the Broomfield area without any difficulty. There, just where the map said it should be, was a house that appeared to be in very good condition. I was disappointed. It looked in far too good a condition to be the one that I had hoped to find. This, I thought can't be the same building. Perhaps we had got it wrong, and the one on the map wasn't the one we were looking for.

My wife looked around and spotted a small local Post Office just a few yards away. She decided to go in and see what they knew (if anything at all) about Spicer's Farm. I went in with her, but we only got blank looks when we mentioned the farm and the Spicers. Then, one of the customers said that while he didn't know of any Spicer's Farm, he did know that the house opposite was known as Spicer's Cottage and had been for as long as he could remember. He pointed through the window at the one just across the road - the one indicated on the map! It was, he said, a very old building, and the new owner had recently had it extensively modernised, which was the reason I had thought the house looked too young to be the one for which we were searching.

Looking at the house again, in spite of the repointed brickwork, the new paint, and the double glazing, I felt then, and still feel, that this was the original Spicer's farm house, and had to be the birthplace of my great great grandmother, way back in 1809. I was, by this time very excited and very pleased with what we had found. Just before we left, I took a photograph, for my records, from across the road. (see Fig 2)

Below, is a copy of the photograph and, just to emphasise the point, where I am standing is Broomfield, in the parish of Herne, while the garden wall in the foreground is still Broomfield, but in the parish of Reculver! No wonder Sarah was confused!



Fig 2 - The house in Broomfield is still known as Spicer's Cottage.

From the Reculver rate books, Henry Spicer, Sarah's grandfather, took on the tenancy of the farm from 1779 until he died in 1808 from when his son, Richard Spicer (our great-great-great-grandfather) took over until 1811. In that year, it appears the old landowner died and the new one became the occupant and decided to run the farm himself - so the Spicer's lost their farm.

The strange thing is that even though the farm changed hands, from the Spicer's to the new owner's as long ago as 1811, the house today is still known locally as 'Spicer's Cottage'

Richard later bought a smallholding in the village of Herne, in Broomfield Road. By the way, Broomfield Road ran from St. Martin's Church out to Reculver. It was so named because of the fields of broom that grew there. Whether or not they were cultivated for the manufacture of brooms, I don't know.

Before that, it was known as 'Pudding lane'. It's not known quite why but, so I was told, it's believed that there was a pie or pudding shop at the Reculver end of the lane.

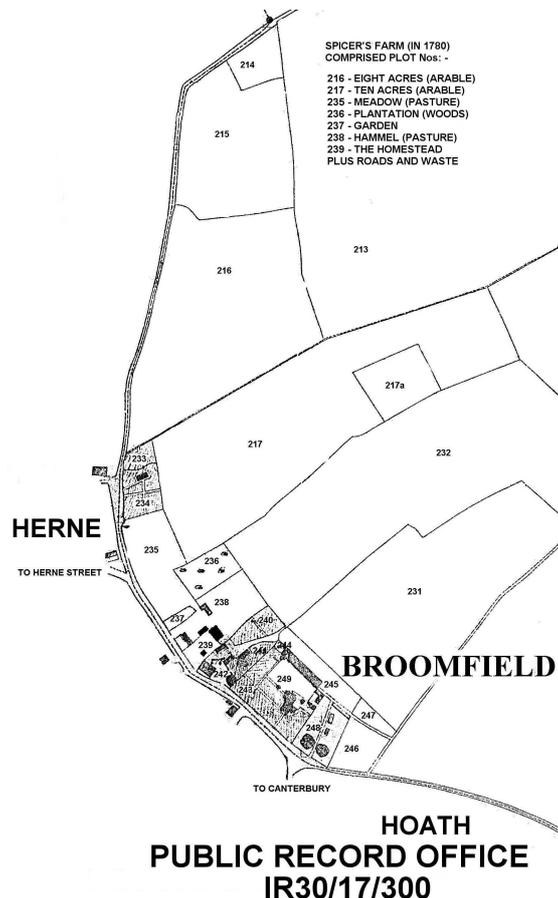
The farm, when Henry Spicer had it, was quite a reasonable size, covering, in total, about twenty-one acres of arable and pasture, and with woodlands and farmhouse plus garden. I obtained a copy of the tithe map of 1835, which shows the area the farm covered

Fig 3 - Tithe Map of 1835 showing the extent of Spicer's farm

In 1850 it appeared on the market, for sale and was described thus:

LOT 12 :

		Acres	Rods	Perches
239	The Homestead	0	0	12
237	Garden	0	0	14
238	Hammel (pasture)	1	0	0
236	Plantation (wood)	0	2	8
235	Meadow (pasture)	1	1	11
217	Ten Acres (arable)	9	3	31
216	Eight Acres (arable)	8	1	35
	Roads and waste	0	1	20
	Total	21	3	29



Well, having satisfied myself that I had found great-great-grandmother, I, then, set out to put together what I knew about great-great-grandfather, John Newport.

1809 June 11th., Sunday. It was on this day that my great-great-grandfather, John Newport, was baptised in the church at Nonington, Kent. The font used for baptisms is dated '1662', and is still in daily use. I have been unable to locate the house, or cottage, where the family lived in the village, though there may still be documents, such as rate books, that I haven't come across yet, so I intend to keep looking.

When I visited the village, some years back now, it was a grey, overcast, and rainy day. The sort of day when it's best to light the fire, draw the curtains, forget all about it, and hope tomorrow will be better. It certainly didn't help the sad and dejected appearance of the sprawling village of Nonington.

I had the impression that Nonington was really two villages in one. There was the very old, medieval, farming village, almost lost among the great number of Victorian houses, built, I assume for the miners, when the production of coal became the more important industry in the area.

The old part of the village was certainly much more attractive, and on a good day would, I felt have been acceptable on the cover of a box of chocolates. Surrounding the 13th. Century church of St. Mary-the-Virgin, it seems to be much the same as great great grandfather would have known it, half-timbered, black and white, thatched cottages by the side of narrow roads that wind their way between the buildings. The roads now have metalled surfaces with traffic markings but they follow the old original tracks carved out by the passage of the horse-drawn vehicles of the many centuries before.

John's parent's, John and Ann Newport, arrived in Nonington sometime between the years 1805 and 1807 from the nearby parish of Kingston where they were married on Saturday the 23rd. February 1805. Why they moved, I have no idea. They weren't miners - they were agricultural labourers, so I suppose that someone offered them work there, but it is a bit of a mystery.

Great great great grandmother Ann, was the daughter of John and Anne Pay, and no stranger to the village of Nonington as she had been born there in 1786, and spent her childhood days there. The parish registers show her baptism along with that of an older brother, William (born 1783), and four younger brothers and four younger sisters. At the time when she and John moved there from Kingston she still had several relatives living in the village, so could it be that it was her relatives who found John work at a time when he was having trouble?

1830 August 29th. Sunday. At Herne village church, the marriage banns of John and Sarah were called, for the last time, before their marriage a week later.

Of more general concern during this week was the growing unrest by the agricultural people of Kent who were becoming more and more worried by what as in effect a time of depression. The combined effects of the Corn Laws, the poor laws, and the drop in market prices were having a big effect on their already poor standard of living. In this last week of August a labour revolt started in Kent, and in particular in the area around Canterbury. As autumn came on it was to spread, north and west.

Great-great-grandfather, being an agricultural labourer, must have known and been very concerned about the situation around him. Whether he was involved to any greater extent than this I don't know.

Gangs of labourers moved about, sometimes as much as a thousand strong, demanding that there be no reduction in the poor law dole money, for higher wages, and the abolition of the payment of tithe. These gangs broke up threshing machines and set fire to hayricks in an effort to demonstrate to Parliament and the country their worry and their strong feelings. These demonstrations became known as the 'Captain Swing Riots' and first threshing machine to be destroyed in these riots was at Lower Hardres, near Canterbury, on August 28, 1830. (Lower Hardres just happens to be where great great great grandfather John Newport was born, in 1782, just coincidence, I'm sure!)

Next day, another machine destroyed some miles away at Newington, near Hythe. In both cases a gang of men from the village of Elham, with others from neighbouring villages, were held to be responsible.

By the third week, about 100 machines had been destroyed, most of them in East Kent.

Seven men were charged with machine breaking and tried at East Kent Sessions. They all pleaded guilty, but Sir Edward Knatchbull discharged them with a caution and a three-day prison sentence.

That same night, a machine was destroyed near Sittingbourne and the next day four more were rendered useless in the Canterbury area.

More men were brought to trial, but the magistrates who heard the cases themselves came under attack. At Cranbrook, a troop of 25 dragoons had to be despatched to disperse a crowd that had gathered to protest against the machines and the conditions and there were similar meetings in other parts of Kent, too. Some of them were peaceful; others were not. It was the fictitious 'Captain Swing' who signed the threatening letters.

The county was in a state of great excitement, as the French Revolution was in everyone's mind and there were all sorts of rumours of revolutionary Frenchmen sneaking into Kent in the guise of smugglers and stirring up trouble where there had been none before and many others.

Throughout the short and violent reign of 'Captain Swing', from 1830 until 1832, of prisoners tried by 12 different courts, 25 were acquitted, 4 were executed for arson, 48 were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment and 52 were transported.

Moves for a general amnesty for the convicted rioters began almost as soon as their sentences were passed, but it was not until 1834 that the first of the 'Captain Swing' convicts was pardoned and released. Those that had been transported were freed to return home, though few could raise the necessary fare to bring them back. Historians differ about how effective the Swing Riots of 1830 were. They did not immediately improve conditions for the labourers, although they did delay the introduction of threshing machines in the same sort of numbers for another twenty years which, after all, was the immediate aim of the men who destroyed them - the men who called themselves, collectively, Captain Swing.

I often think how nice it would be to live in the quiet past where nothing much happened and you just got on with life!

1830 September 1st, Wednesday. John and Sarah were married at St. Martin's Church, Herne. Below is a photograph of that entry

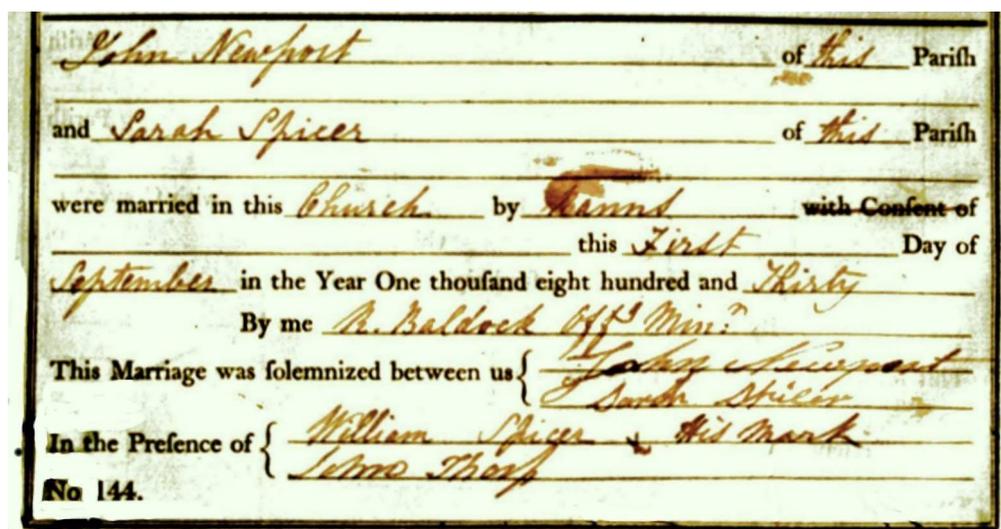


Fig 4 - The marriage entry of John Newport and Sarah Spicer, photographed from the original registers at Herne, Kent. Where the entry says 'This Marriage was solemnized between us', the signatures of both John and Sarah are, indeed, their signatures. They didn't sign with a cross and their writing is both clear and quite

The marriage entry reads:

John Newport, of this parish and Sarah Spicer, of this parish, were married in this church, by banns, this first day of September in the Year One thousand eight hundred and thirty.

By me - R. Baldock, Officiating Minister.

This marriage was solemnised between us: John Newport, Sarah Spicer

In the Presence of: William Spicer X His Mark

John Thorp

The witness, William Spicer, was, I'm certain, Sarah's 19-year-old brother, though I have no proof of this. John Thorp was the parish clerk.

Our John was 21 years of age, while Sarah was two years older. It wasn't uncommon at this time for the bride to be older than the groom. In fact, looking at the parish registers, the difference in ages was not only quite often this way round but could be far greater than in this instance.

I haven't yet found out why John went to Herne in the first place, nor when or from where. Neither have I any idea why he stayed there for the rest of his life, never, as far as I have found out, having to leave in search for work. It seems obvious that he had found continuous and stable employment with someone - but whom? A large landowner, perhaps, who had a manor house and large gardens? John does put himself down in later censuses as a 'gardener'.

This, of course, being the bride's parish, would be the reason for having the wedding there, but he must have had some reason for staying - and where did he meet Sarah? Did he go there with his parents who were, perhaps, looking for work? Why, if so, did he stay when they moved on? Or did he return later because of the possibility of work for himself? These are all questions for which I hope to find answers one day.

1831 January 16th. Sunday. John and Sarah's first child, a daughter, Ann, was baptized on this day at Herne church. Obviously, Sarah was pregnant at the time of their wedding which was a quite common happening, as can, again, be seen from the parish registers.

Though I had searched the Bishop's Transcripts and found all the Newport baptisms, marriages, and burials, over the past few hundred years, I had never come across the baptism of Ann. The first thoughts you have, when faced with such a situation, range from 'Were they baptised somewhere else?' to 'Have I made a mistake and included someone who isn't one of my ancestors?'

You start to think of all the researching, and re-thinking, you have to do in order to find why you included that person in the family in the first place so that you can double check all those sources, in the search for the error.

It was only in the 1992 that I was able to search the original parish registers of St. Martin's church, Herne, and I was surprised and very pleased, when I came across Ann's baptism entry. Up until then I had only been able to see the Bishop's Transcripts as the registers themselves were in the keeping of the incumbent.

When I heard that these registers had been deposited in Canterbury Cathedral Archives library and, within reason, were now easily accessible to all, I booked a table and placed my order. Though I, roughly, knew the date of Ann's baptism, it was a great thrill to actually find it.

For information, the Bishop's Transcripts were an annual written record of all births, deaths, and marriages performed in the parish by the vicar and came about by order of the clergy of the province of Canterbury in 1597. Copies of the registers had to be sent to the Registrar of each diocese. Unfortunately all vicars didn't take the same care and the accuracy of the copying suffered. One vicar even copied the events from the wrong year - and did it too many times for it to be an accident! These BTs, however, can contain gaps, errors, and omissions due to the lack of care taken by the incumbent but they can also contain more detail and may well have survived where the original registers have been lost or damaged.

1834 March 31st. Monday. Either in late 1833 or early 1834 the couple had their second child, a son whom they named John William, baptising him at Herne Church. John, the father, was described in the register entry as "a servant". What type of "servant" he was, and for whom, I don't yet know. Whether I ever will be able to find out is equally unknown, but things do, especially in family history, have the habit of turning up unexpectedly. While all types of workers were known as servants, it was usual to be more specific than here, even if only to differentiate between 'house servant' and 'farm servant'.

1835 - 1841 An examination of the rate books show that the family were living, during this period, in one room of a house, which belonged at that time to a Richard Thorp. The rent was £1-10-0 a year. It was a rather peculiar building, demolished about 1854, being mediaeval in design with an overhanging storey at one end, and a Dutch" gable at the other. (see Fig 5)



Fig 5 - shows a view, of Herne Street, looking south towards the church of St. Martin, whose tower turret can be seen over the rooftops. The original appeared as an illustration in "The Lady's Newspaper" of 1848. It's marked number '1' on the map (see Fig 6)

The house was situated at the north end of the village and on the left-hand side of the main road as you leave. It was the second building up from the Lower Red Lion public house, which is still in existence today. Incidentally, the building in between John's one room and the public house was originally the vicar's residence but by 1835 was a grocer's shop, owned by Edward Man who married Sarah's cousin Mary Jane Coombes.

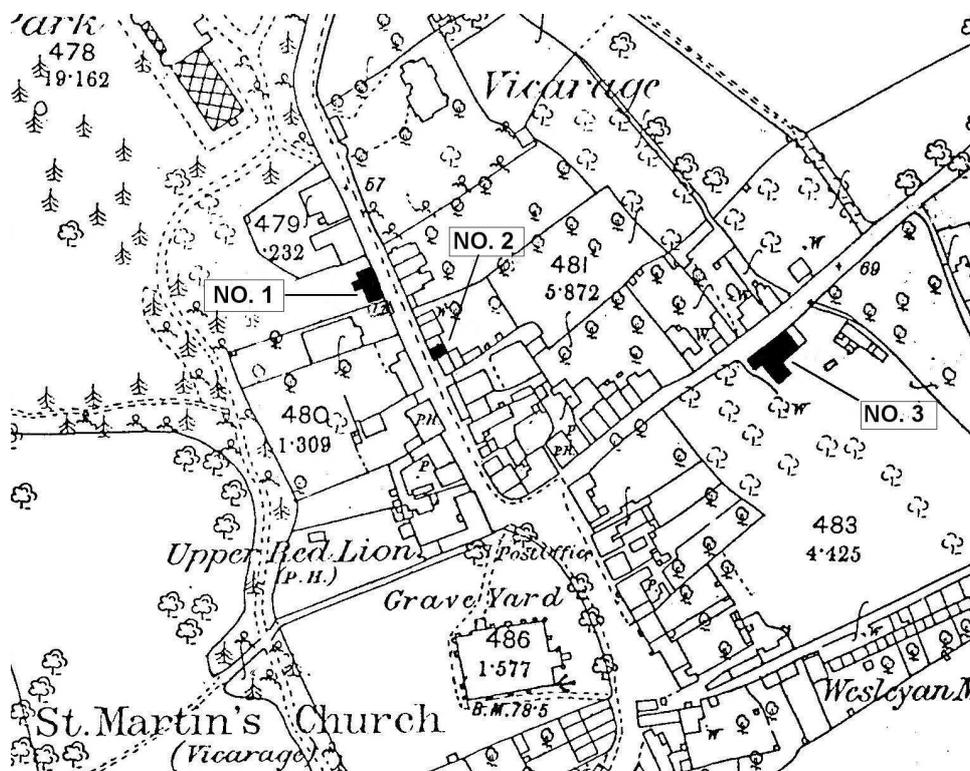


Fig. 6 Map of Herne showing the three houses in which John & Sarah and family lived (No. 1 from 1835 to 1841; No. 2 from 1841 to 1847, No.3 from- 1847 to 1899)

1835 Sometime this year, John's father-in-law, Richard Spicer, took on the tenancy of a cottage in Broomfield Lane, Herne (later to become 'School Lane' when the National School was built) where he lived with his wife and family. This cottage was eventually (in 1847) to become the home of John Newport and his family, until it was finally demolished in 1899. The owner was John Palmer, a member of a local wealthy land-owning family.

A slight digression. In **1835**, Sarah's sister Jane Elizabeth Spicer married a Stephen Cottew. The name 'Cottew' actually derives from the French word 'Couteau', meaning 'knife' so it's reasonable to assume that Stephen's ancestry was French. In many of the Kent parish registers you will find this surname with a variety of spellings - 'Cotter, Cotton, Kootto, Ketto, Catteau, Cattew and even Cartew.

However, to get to the point, looking at the map, Fig 6, opposite house no. 1, is a block of cottages - four in total (one is much smaller than the others). From 1730, these cottages were owned by the Cottew family.

In 1802, a John Cottew, who was the owner at that time, died intestate. There is an ancient Kentish Law known as 'Gavelkind', which was different from all more normal methods of inheritance. Should a man die intestate, all his sons inherited equally. Well,. John had eight sons so each inherited a one eighth part of each of the four cottages - not, as one would have expected, half a cottage each, being as there were, after all, four cottages!

As the various brothers died off, each brother's share got a bit larger so that when three had died, also intestate, the remaining five now inherited those fractions of the total estate and owned one fifth each.

Complications set in (you mean there weren't any already?) when the fourth, married brother died leaving four sons but no will! Each of those four sons inherited a quarter of their father's one fifth of the original one-eighth share! Still with me? So now there were four brothers with one fifth each and four nephews with one twentieth each!

That was bad enough, but in 1850 a Thomas Collard, a corn factor of Canterbury, wanted to buy the whole property and found that he had a lot of negotiating to do.

One of the original eight was now living in La Salle, in Illinois, in the USA, one at St Stephen's Canterbury and two in Herne. Of the four nephews, their father had moved to South Shields, become a Master Mariner and then lost at sea. Two of his sons were living in South Shields, one in St. Dunstan's, Canterbury, and one in Australia.

Thomas Collard started off with the sons and the 'fifths'. He got one-fifth share from William Cottew of St. Stephen's for £60 and one from Peter, in Illinois, for £40.

In 1851, Isaac Cottew, of Herne, mortgaged his share to Collard for a loan of £15 and Stephen (the husband of Jane Elizabeth, my great great grandmother's sister) sold his share, in 1854, for £60.

Later that year, Thomas Collard made his will leaving everything to his wife.

After Isaac Cottew's mortgage had gone on for nine years he finally conveyed his interest in the cottage to Thomas Collard for the outstanding debt of £15 plus £25 cash.

When Thomas Collard died in 1867, he still hadn't got around to sorting out the four nephews with their twentieths and his widow let things slide until 1882 when she decided to dispose of the property but had to get hold of all of it first.

So, finally, Charles Cottew, gent, of St. Dunstan's, Canterbury, James Edward Cottew, of Melbourne, Australia, John Cottew of South Shields, Captain in the Merchant Service, and Stephen Cottew, also of South Shields, a Ship Surveyor, accepted £15 each for their little fractions of the four little cottages in Herne.

To sum it all up, the Collards had paid to the Cottews a total of £250. What it had cost them over the previous 30 years in lawyer's bills is unknown but when Thomas Collard's widow came to sell the whole thing a year later, she accepted a sum of only £300 from a pork butcher, Henry Sheppard of Herne Bay. A total profit (forgetting lawyer's bills) of £50 over 30 years.

And after all that, Stephen Cottew, my great great grandmother's brother-in-law, was still staying in the same cottage as he had been all those years ago!

1837 February 17th. Friday. My great grandfather, George, the third child of John and Sarah's third child was born today. The date is accurate because George wrote his date of birth, and that of other members of his family, on the flyleaf of a small bible. Though the bible has not itself survived, that single sheet has. It was pasted, by my grandfather, into his scrapbook, which is where I found it.

1837 March 19th. Sunday. George was baptised at Herne Church by the Reverend J. S. May. John, his father was again described in the parish registers as a 'servant'.

1837 July 1st. Civil Registration became law and, though by no means fully complied with in the first few years, it was the start of our present system of Birth, Death, and Marriage Certificates. Unfortunately, for me in my early days of searching for the family history, George happened to be born at the wrong end of this year, and I could find no trace of him for some time.

I began searching the last area where I knew he had lived. From my grandfather's birth certificate, this was Hampstead. It was some time before I found out the truth, that he was born in Herne, Kent, and the story of how I found this out is indeed a story in it's own right!

1840 July 10th. Friday. John William, aged 6, died earlier in the week and was buried on this day in Herne Churchyard. By this time Sarah was already expecting their fourth child.

1840 November 29th. Sunday. William, their fourth child, was baptised at the Herne church. This time the registers gave John's occupation as a labourer. At the time of the 1841 census, John was still living in the 'Dutch' gabled cottage, as his address is still 'Herne Street', which was the 'main' road running north-south through the village. At this time, and for some years afterwards, houses weren't numbered so it's difficult to determine exactly which house someone lived in.

Another problem, I found, was that 'Herne' village was originally known as 'Herne Street'. Only later, when the village grew and became known as 'Herne' did the main road become 'Herne Street'. In a way it had only retained its name as all there ever was of this village, at one time, was the 'street'.

1841 Sunday 7th. June. This year's census for Herne Street shows: -

Name	Age	Occupation	Born in Kent?
John Newport	30	Agricultural Labourer	Yes
Sarah Newport	30		Yes
Ann Newport	10		Yes
George Newport	4		Yes
William Newport	1		Yes

1841 Sunday 7th. June. This year's census for Broomfield Lane, Herne Street shows: -

Name	Age	Occupation	Born in Kent?
Richard Spicer	65	Agricultural Labourer	Yes
Henry Spicer	37		Yes
Mary Spicer	35		Yes
William Spicer	6		Yes
Jane Spicer	2		Yes

Ann	Spicer	22	Yes
Richard	Spicer	1	Yes

The 1841 Census was not a good one from the point of view of a family historian. Ages were rounded down, relationships were not indicated and an individual was only required to say whether or not he/she was born in Kent. It didn't ask where in the county.



*Fig 7 (a) - John and Family's house in Herne Street (No.2 on the map, Fig. 6)
The view is looking northward, up the main street, with St Martin's Church immediately behind you.
It was demolished many years later and new houses built on the site.*



Fig 7 (b) –Another view of the house, taken from further down the street, and showing more detail.

1841 October. By this time, John and his family had moved across the street to a cottage owned by a John Brown (see Fig 6). The yearly rental this time was £4, which seems to indicate that the family was financially better off than they had been previously.

1843 May 27th. Saturday. John and Sarah's fifth child was born, and it was another daughter, who they named Sarah, after her mother.

1843 June 25th. Sunday. Sarah was baptised at St. Martin's Church, Herne. John is yet again described in the register entry as a 'servant'.

1847 January 31st. The couple's sixth and last child was born in early 1847. It was a boy who was baptised James Newport at Herne Church. John's description of his occupation had reverted to 'labourer'.

This same year, the family moved out of the cottage in Herne Street and into the cottage in Broomfield Lane to live with Richard Spicer, Sarah's father. Richard's son and his family had moved on and Richard himself was now 73 and living alone so there was room for John, Sarah and their children.

1849 December 23rd., Sunday. Some time during this year, probably in late November, a seventh child was born. It was a boy who was baptised John at Herne Church on Sunday 23rd. December. John, the father, gives his occupation as 'labourer'.

1850 August 24th. Saturday. John, the youngest child, died and his burial took place at Herne Church yard on Saturday 24th. August. He was 9 months old.

1851 March 31st., Monday. The Census taken this year gives more information than that of 1841 and is the first of any real use to the family historian.

Correct ages, assuming that the person knew their own age, had to be given, together with their relation to the head of the household, whether married or not, and their exact place of birth. According to this census, John, Sarah, and four of their children were now living in a house back in Herne where Richard Spicer was the tenant. Richard's wife had obviously died by this time, and Ann (their oldest child) had moved out.

She (Ann) was a kitchen maid at the 'Fountain Hotel' (see Fig. 8) in St. Margaret's Street, Canterbury, which was renamed later as the 'Royal Fountain Hotel' after a short stay there by Queen Victoria. During the Second World War enemy bombing destroyed the hotel, and a large area around it. Rebuilding took place after the war and to day a shopping complex has been built upon the site of the hotel. Strangely enough each plot of land that was sold for re-development restricted the rebuilding to the confines of the deeds, with the result that that part of Canterbury follows almost exactly the original mediaeval layout.



Fig. 8 The 'Royal Fountain Hotel' (originally the 'Fountain Hotel').

In the census for Herne Street, John now gives his occupation as that of 'gardener', while George, at 14, was an agricultural labourer.

This change in John's employment is very interesting. The first question I had was "What exactly is the difference between a 'gardener' and an 'agricultural labourer'"?

I imagine the latter to be someone who works on a farm, and is involved in heavy, manual work, such as hoeing, or mending fences. General labouring, in other words. He didn't say he was a shepherd or herdsman so he wasn't involved with either sheep or cattle. Nor did he put himself down as a 'ploughman', or some other recognisable trade. So it seems most likely, especially as this is Kent we are talking about, that he was employed on a farm, producing as its main line vegetables, fruit, or hops - or perhaps all three.

The former occupation, 'gardener', would definitely be someone who was involved with the cultivation of plants, etc., so, perhaps the second job was a natural progression from the first.

Of course, there is always the possibility that he worked as a gardener at a large country house. The nearest, and most likely, would, I believe, have been Strode Park House, which was occupied by the vicar of Herne, the reverend James S. May and several other members of the May family.

George May, the father of James had owned three considerable farms, Strode, Studd Hill, and Great Ruckinge, and three smaller holdings (633 acres in all) when he died in 1849, leaving it all to his family. Of these I feel that, what became, Strode Park House was the most likely place to employ John.

However, there is one more likely explanation. John was now living with Richard Spicer, his father-in-law, who had been a farmer and bought a small-holding that adjoined the house in which they all lived. Richard was, as I've said before, now 77 years of age so what is more likely than John took over the running of that small-holding?

Here is the census for 1851 showing all who lived in the cottage in Broomfield Road.

1851 Census year (March 31st.) Piece No. HO107/1625, Folio No. 318v for the village of Herne.

Name			Age	Occupation	Born
Richard Spicer	Head	Wdr.	77	Pauper Ag. Lab.	Reculver
John Newport	Son/law	Mar	43	Gardener	Nonington
Sarah Newport	Wife	Mar.	44		Reculver
George Newport	G/Son	Un	14		Herne
William Newport	G/Son	Un	10	Scholar	Herne
Sarah Newport	G/Dau.	Un	7	Scholar	Herne
James Newport	G/Son	Un.	4	Scholar	Herne

1851 March 31st - Census. Piece No. HO107/1624, Folio No. 453v for St. Margaret's, Canterbury. Address: 15 and 16 St.Margaret's Street. "Fountain Hotel".

Name			Age	Occupation	Born	
Ann	Newport	Servant.	Un.	20	Kitchen Maid	Herne

1854 Fig 9 shows an extract from the Herne rate book for this year. Richard Spicer is listed as the occupier of the house (or cottage) in Broomfield Lane (or School lane) and John Palmer as the owner.

19		PARISH OF			RATE.			
ARREARS.								
Number.	Due, or if excused.	If excused, write the word "excused."	Name of Occupier.	No. of Votes.	Name of Owner.	No. of Votes.	Description of Property rated.	Name or Situation of Property.
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
237			Harrison George				House & Shop	Herne Street
238							Cottage	
239			Dilnot George		Nettle		House & Shop	
240			Widdett Mrs		Self		Cottage	
241			Harris George		Coth of Widdett		Cottage	
242			Hersberg Widow		John Thorp		Cottage	
243			Hudson John		Same		Cottage	
244					Same		Street & Garden	
245			Sutton William		John Palmer		Cottage & Garden	
246			Spicer Richard		Same		Cottage	
247			Spicer William		Mrs Wilson		Cottage	
248			Wilson Thomas		Same		Cottage	

Fig. 9 The Rate Book of 1854, showing Richard Spicer as the 'occupier' and John Palmer as the owner.

1855 January 16th. Tuesday. Richard Spicer died, according to the death certificate, of 'Gangrena Senilis', which appears to be a blood clot, possibly to the brain, due to old age. Great great grandfather, John, was the informant, and the address was given simply as 'The Street, Herne'.

1855 January 21st. Sunday. Richard Spicer was buried in Herne Churchyard. After Richard's death, John took over the tenancy of the cottage, which would remain the family home until it was demolished, many years later.

1861 April 8th. Though I've searched the 1861 census of Kent, I haven't found any mention of George or William, his brother. George may well have gone to London by now, as he was to marry his first wife, two years later, in 1863, at St George's, Hanover Square. The whereabouts of William is unknown, to me and he may have moved to London with his brother.

James (aged 14), their much younger brother, was listed in the Palmer Household at Herne Common, as a servant. This is the same Palmer family that owned the cottage in Broomfield Lane, where John and his family were living.

1861 Census -April 8th

Name	Age	Occupation	Where born?
John Newport Head Mar. 54	Gardener	Nonington	
Sarah Newport Wife Mar. 54		Reculver	
Sarah Newport Dau Un. 17		Herne	
Mary J. Man Relative Wid. 57		Herne	

Mary J. Man was baptised Mary Jane Coombes at Herne on 15th. June 1803, and was the cousin of Sarah Spicer, my great great grandmother. Mary married Edward Man, grocer and baker, from Holborn, in London, who had obviously died by the time of the census of 1861.

The business that Edward and Mary Jane ran was located in the building north of the 'Lower Red Lion' public house (which still exists to-day) in Herne. Edward appears to have died 1858, as Melville's Directory for this year listed Mary Jane as the owner.

The couple had at least two children to my knowledge, Sarah Ann, born 1849, and Maria, born 1842.

1861 April 8th. The census also shows the whereabouts of Ann, the eldest daughter of John and Sarah.

Bridge Village - RG9/518 - f34v

Name				Age	Occupation	Where Born
Mary	Edlin	Head	Wid	42	Fundholder	Bridge
Ann	Newport	Servant	Un.	30	Cook	Herne

Ann has changed her job as kitchen maid in the hotel to that of a cook in a private house, which I would imagine was a much better position as the owner of the house was a lady of private means (her occupation is given as 'Fundholder').

1861 October 17th. Ann, the daughter, born 1831, married a Joseph Ellender Potter, at Bridge. The entry in the register reads:

Joseph Ellender Potter, of full age, bachelor, mariner, Dover, father Morris Potter, rope maker, to Ann Newport, of full age, spinster, Bridge. Father John Newport, Gardener.

Witnesses: William Newport and Mary E Potter.

William was almost certainly her younger brother, born in 1840.

The term 'of full age' was used for people who were over twenty-one and no longer needed their parent's consent to marry. Ann would have been thirty years old.

1864 October 15th. A Sarah Newport appears as a witness at the wedding of Stephen Cottew to Susannah Hancock at Sturry in Kent; the father of the groom is also Stephen Cottew. I believe that this Sarah is the youngest daughter of John and Sarah Newport, my great great grandfather and grandmother.

I, also, think it is obvious that the father is the same Stephen Cottew who married Jane Elizabeth Spicer, the sister of my great great grandmother.

1865 June 10th William married Elizabeth Norman at St Mary's Church, Reading, Berkshire.

1871 John, aged 62, was listed in the census for this year, as a 'market gardener'. He rented the land, behind and to the side of the cottage, where he grew fruit and vegetables.

I know there were fruit trees behind the house and that he owned at least one horse and a cart. A sketch, done by my grandfather on a visit to the house in 1882, shows the rear of the cottage. In what we might call the back yard there appear to be round boxes lying about, with some of them stacked. These boxes look just like the wicker ones used by the porters in Covent Garden. I forget the name but they were used for carrying fruit, though, as far as I am aware, they could equally be used for vegetables.

In the rate books of 1882, the total extent of the property (both cottage and garden) amounted to no more than a quarter of an acre. Did he, on the other hand, work as a gardener for someone else who owned a market garden?

Sarah, John's daughter, does not appear in the returns for Herne and her whereabouts is at present a mystery. James is, however, there as a milkman, still unmarried, and still living at home. He would, however, more than make up for this later in life!

1860 (About) The picture on the next sheet (Fig 10) seems to have been taken in the 1860s. It was dated, by a professional, from the dress worn by the two ladies and the type of photographic plate used.

From what I see in the photograph and the apparent ages of the two women, I would agree with that rough date. From what I have seen, on the Internet, photography is considered to have commenced in 1839 and the type of glass plate used seems to fit the description of an "Ambrotype", which is dated as being used

between 1851 and 1880. This was a glass slide on which the image appeared positive from all angles - and that is how I remember the glass photograph.

The older lady, from the way she is standing in the doorway, obviously owns the house; her body language says so. Because my great great grandparents lived there from the 1830's until they died, she in 1880 and he in 1882, she has to be great great grandmother, Sarah Newport.

Her daughter, Ann, would have been 29 years old in 1860, working as a servant to a Mrs Edlin in Bridge but I think that she is the second woman in the photo. Ann married a Joseph Ellender Potter, 1861 and lived in Bridge from there on.

And who is the little child on the grass verge to the lower left - one of the family or a neighbour?



Fig 10 - Newport's Cottage, Broomfield Lane

The little ramshackle shed by the side of the house, which appears to be a very basic wood structure with a thatched roof, may well have been used purely as a store house - for wood or such like but, later on, it may well have held the harnesses, etc., for the horse they then had which was used in James's carrier business.



Fig 11 - Newport's Cottage, Broomfield Lane (copy of a 19th. Century painting)

On my wall, by my side at the time I'm writing, there's a copy of a painting of almost the same scene done by an artist, around 1856. I had the watercolour copy done, a few years back, by a Herne Bay local artist and took a photograph of it for my records and this appears below. As can be seen, it below shows much the same scene except that the ramshackle shed by the side of the house appears to be more solidly built of wood. I say James's carrier business because John died in 1882 and the earliest reference to a carrier is in 1889 (see later)

1871 April 2nd. The census listed the family as:

Name				Age	Occupation	Where Born
John	Newport	Head	Mar	62	Market Gardener	Nonington
Sarah	Newport	Wife	Mar	64		Broomfield, Herne

1880 September 2nd. Thursday. Sarah died and was later buried next to her father in Herne Churchyard. They share a common headstone but are, I believe, buried on either side, in separate graves.

1881 April 3rd. The Census for this year gives the following information:

Herne Street RG11/963 174 p16. 84

Name				Age	Occupation	Where Born
John	Newport	Head	Widr	72	Gardener	Nonington
James	Newport	Son	Un	34	Milkman & Carrier	Herne
Jane	Cottew	Sister	Wid	71	Housekeeper	Herne

Jane Cottew, were not John's sister but that of his late wife. James had by this time taken over the tenancy of the cottage and garden, as it is his name that appears in the rate books from this time on.

The rateable value of the property, in this year, was £3/5/0 per annum with the rate, at 6d. in the pound, being 1s 7 1/2d.

1882 November 11th. Saturday. John died, aged 73, of 'heart disease' and is buried with Sarah in the same grave in Herne Churchyard. The informant, on the certificate, was his son James.

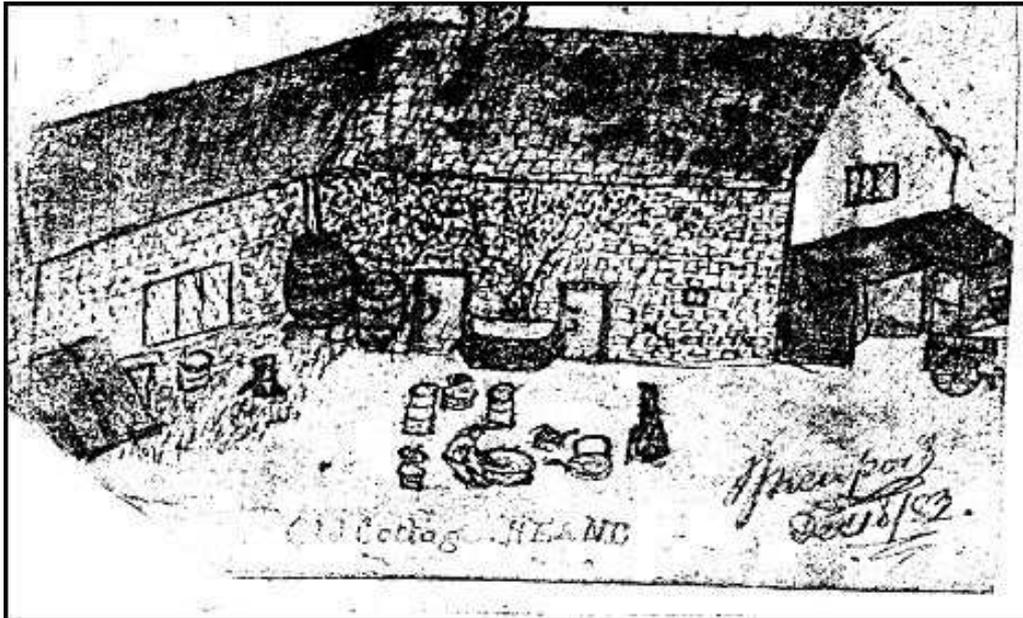


Fig 12 - The back of 'Newport's Cottage' - from a drawing by John James Newport, in 1882

James, the youngest brother, who had stayed at home, went on living in the house for some time before it was finally demolished, in 1898/9.

From sketches, dated December 18th 1882, in my grandfather's scrapbook, it would seem that George and, perhaps his family (grandfather, obviously) were in Herne for Christmas that year. Whether they went just to spend Christmas with James or remained after his funeral to, perhaps, settle any affairs, I don't yet know.

The sketch above was drawn by my grandfather, John James Newport, in 1882, when he was 15 years old. The ramshackle, thatched roofed, 'shed' has, by this time, been replaced by the more solidly built wooden that we saw in the earlier photograph (see Fig 11)

The original drawing is larger than shown here and is, as you might expect, much clearer so it is that picture that I have been examining and on which the following comments are based.

On the lower left of the building, is what I at first took to be the sloping doors of a cellar but on closer examination, and taking into account the strange shapes of the items just to the right of the 'doors', 'they' could be a small carriage or cart stood on end and leaning against the wall. The other items, to their right, look like tools used in the business, perhaps. Unfortunately, it's very difficult to say what they are and the longer you look at them the more difficult it becomes.

In the corner of the hose is what appears to be a large rainwater butt with a barrel standing upright next to it. To their right, there are two doors set into the back wall with what could be (and I think most likely is) a horse trough between them.

To the right of the building itself (but still on the back wall) is what appears to be a lantern. It looks too small for a window and they may well have needed an outside light considering the business that they were in and that they had a horse to look after.

There are two people in the yard - a man (just left of centre) doing something to, putting something in, cleaning or moving, a (tin?) bath or large basin of some sort. He must be James, John youngest son who was now running the market garden by himself. The woman in the picture must be Jane Cottew, John's sister-in-law, who had been the housekeeper for John and James for the past two years. She obviously needed a stick, which she is carrying in her right hand.

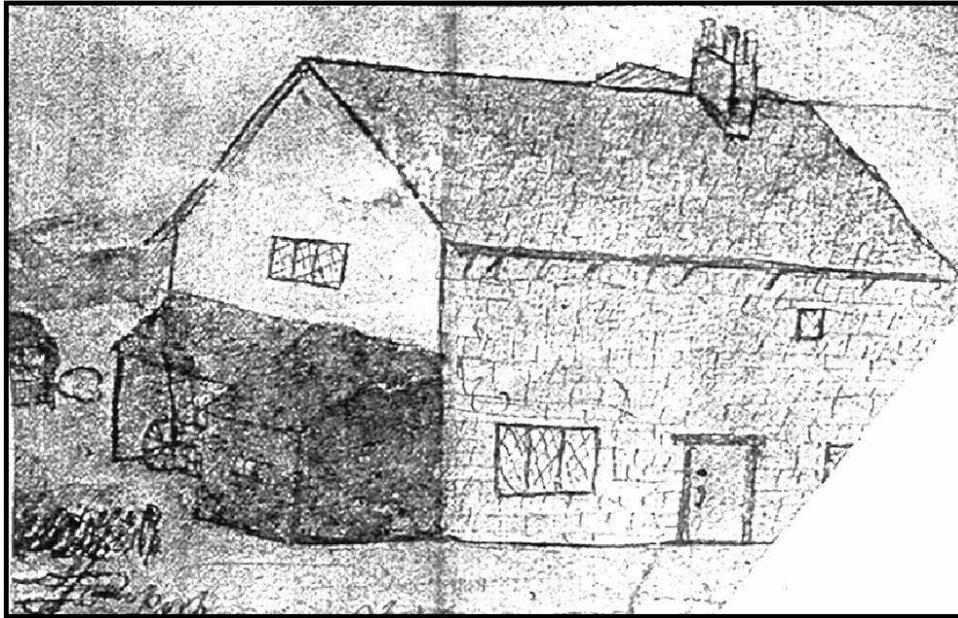


Fig 13. - The sketch above was done at the same time as the one in Fig 12 and clearly shows a trap or something similar inside the shed. Grandfather also indicates roof supports (about six) while the painting shows two and the original 'Newport Cottage' photograph shows none at all.

On page 2, I mentioned the headstone of John & Sarah, in St. Martin's Churchyard. Well, it's very badly worn and the inscription has almost completely eroded away, though it is possible to make out some of the words, at the top of the stone, such as "In Affectionate Remembrance of", and then the name "SARAH NEWPORT". Other words can be guessed at, but are not clear.

Later, when speaking to a local historian, he told me of a man who, at the turn of the century, had recorded all the monumental inscriptions in that particular churchyard and published them in a book.



Fig 14. The headstone of John & Sarah Newport and Richard Spicer. The name 'Sarah Newport' can just be made out on the original as can her father's, Richard Spicer, on the reverse side. John's name has eroded too far.

Later, I searched for and found the book in the local Kent library. The author's name was 'Dwelley' and when he made his notes, back in 1914, John and Sarah had only died, roughly, 30 years before so he could obviously see and read the inscriptions much clearer than I could, almost a century later. He, understandably, concerned himself mainly with copying down the facts, such as name, age, year, etc., so didn't bother to record religious inscriptions.

Regarding John, Sarah, and Richard, Dwelley's entries read as follows: -

Entry No. 222 - Sarah Newport, d. Sep. 2 1880, aged 73, also John Newport, d. Nov 11th, 1882, aged 73.

Entry No. 280 - Richard Spicer, d. Jan 16th. 1855, aged 83.

Richard's inscription is, strangely enough, engraved on the other side of the headstone to that of John and Sarah's but whether he is also buried on the other side, I don't know.



Fig 15. To give some idea as to where the graves are located in Herne Churchyard, the headstone of John and Sarah Newport and Richard Spicer, is the one in the centre of the picture with the two small footstones almost buried in the grass; and with what appears to be a single larger footstone just visible behind the headstone. You are looking at the front of the church and the main entrance can be seen almost in the centre of the picture, below the large set of windows.

I later obtained the death certificates of John, Sarah, and Richard, and these confirmed the ages (and therefore the year of birth) of each individual.

I am sure that I have the correct, and it seems the only, Richard and Elizabeth Spicer, so I am equally convinced that, whatever the reason for the mistake in the baptism registers of Reculver, Elizabeth, of 1806, was, beyond a reasonable doubt, our Sarah.

The following photograph is interesting in that it shows not only 'Newport's Cottage' (first on the left) but also the second on the left, near the centre of the picture, was Richard Spicer's house and, in fact, is part of the main building forming an 'L' shape out of the two) but also a man leading a horse out from the back garden.



Fig 16. - Newport's Cottage.

Though I have no positive proof, the man holding the horse, in Fig 16, above, HAS to be James, the youngest son of John and Sarah. James ran a small carrier business between Herne and Herne Bay as well as the market garden, as the entries below show. The horse has, obviously, just been led out of the yard and into the lane.

In 'Rideout's Directory of Canterbury and Neighbourhood, with Faversham, Herne bay and Whitstable', dated 1889, the following entry appears in the Herne section: -

James Newport	Carrier to Herne Bay	Herne Street.
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In Pike's 'Blue Book (another directory of the period), for 1893-1894 and for 1894-1895, there are identical entries as below: -

Herne	J. Newport - Market Gardener	Herne Street
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The Market Garden

The following two photographs (Fig 17 and Fig 18) show the market garden, which lay behind and to the side of the old cottage.



Fig 17 - View of the market garden at the back and side of the old cottage

The cottage has now gone, so it's after 1899 but because of the date in the lower right hand corner it's earlier than 1912.

The haystack in the picture may well have been John's (or James's). There's a small tree (apple?) growing just to the right of the path, low down in the middle of the picture. It seems a strange place to have such a tree but it would appear to be old enough to have been there when John lived in the cottage.

It seems strange, now, but we are probably looking at the market garden laid out as John would have known it or, perhaps, he was responsible for the laying out in the first place.

I have no idea as to how big the garden was or whether all we see is all there was. It would also be interesting to know what sort of produce he grew. Both postcards, because of the leaves on the trees, look as though they were taken in spring or early summer – also, there isn't the feeling of the untidiness you get in late summer when all the greenery has grown that bit too much. If so, then the bare branches set out in rows across the width of the garden, could be pea sticks and, the taller ones, perhaps, runner bean sticks.

The second photograph may have been taken some years earlier than the first because it shows the haystack as being complete. On the other hand the haystack may have been re-built, later. Interestingly, by the side of the haystack, you can see a carriage, which may well have been John's and later belonged to James.



Fig 18 -Another view (from ground level) of the market garden at the back and side of the old cottage

In 1897 (at the age of 50), James finally got married and moved out of the cottage to live in Herne Bay, at 17, Underdown Road. According a rumour, which we were told, James named the building ‘Chatham House’ after the building society from which he borrowed the money!

It’s a nice story, there is another story which would seem to be more likely, and it’s this. The house was, actually, built much earlier in the century by an Edward Minter on land owned by a gentleman by the name of John Brough and in 1864, a John Banks, local sub-postmaster, stationer, hairdresser and perfumer, bought the house for £280 and named it after his birthplace, Chatham.

When John Banks died in 1897, he left ‘Chatham House’ to his housekeeper, Elizabeth Brooks, who, that same year married James. She willed it to him on condition that when he died it would be sold and the proceeds go to the Kent and Canterbury Hospital. So, James never took out a mortgage on the property, at all, as it had never belonged to him and the house was already named “Chatham House” when he moved in.

Betsy, died in 1908, at the age of 63 but James lived on for another nine years, dying in 1917. However, he managed to get married again - to a Susan Fletcher - on 8th May, 1910! He was 63 years of age but didn’t wait long! Susan’s father was, however, a ‘manufacturer’ (of what, I don’t know) but probably had money so James may have thought he was on to a good thing!

I took the next photograph in 1986 when I first visited Herne specifically to take pictures of the area that great great grandfather would have known. I had pored over the old photograph (Fig 10) so many times that when I stood outside the white, timbered building to the right in the above photograph I had the strangest feeling that when I turned around I would see the old cottage, just as it used to be, and the two women standing outside. I was, actually, a little bit nervous of turning round!

When I finally did turn, however, all there was, was the open ground where it had once stood - now used for parking cars. It was an very eerie feeling, however.

For the future, I want to see what I can find out about John's business as a market gardener. Did he only sell locally, and if so where? Is it possible to find out?

If he marketed his produce in, perhaps, Canterbury, is it possible to discover where? I keep looking for advertisements in local newspapers but, so far, have been unsuccessful.



Fig. 19 - School Lane in 1986.

And so ends the story of my great-great-grandparents - at least for while, perhaps. I shall keep looking for more information on them as it often surprises me as to just how much data has survived the years and sometimes turns up in the most unexpected places and the most unexpected times.
